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A Psychological Analysis of the *Sense of Agency* in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* and *Yogasūtra*

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A Psychological Analysis of the *Sense of Agency* in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* and *Yogasūtra*

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Hemal Pradip Trivedi

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Dedication

With deep respect, I bow to my mother and father, ancestral lineage, *gurus* and Vedic tradition. With great humility, I bow to the *śāstra* that has taught me great wisdom and insight into the human condition. I dedicate my work to the knowledge in and surrounding the *Vedas* and for the educational progress and prosperity of the modern Hindu community. In addition, I dedicate this work to my grandfather Narendra Desai in hopes that I have made him proud and that my work may contribute to the peace and awareness of all beings, especially non-violence towards all animals.

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ॥

na hi jñānena sadṛśam pavitramiha vidyate ॥

There is nothing equal to the purifying essence of knowledge.

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Abstract

A Psychological Analysis of the *Sense of Agency* in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* and *Yogasūtra*

by

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Sāṅkhya, with its rigorous introduction to metaphysics, revolutionizes Indian philosophy by delineating the constituents of reality: *puruṣa* (consciousness) and *prakṛti* (matter). *Yoga*, the sister school of *Sāṅkhya*, borrows from the latter's metaphysics and introduces a psychologically based paradigm that allows for practitioners to apply the metaphysical teachings of *Sāṅkhya*. Using the metaphysical and psychological constructs of the mind in both schools, this paper serves to ask the question: Which school of thought, through their authoritative texts, generates more of a *sense of agency* for the practitioner? In other words, which text encourages the practitioner to feel that he is an agent of his actions? Using the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* to represent *Sāṅkhya*, this paper explores the impersonal feelings evoked by the predominance of metaphysics in this text. Using the *Yogasūtra* to represent *Yoga*, this paper reveals the highly personal and egoic reading provided by psychology and practice based verses. Using four concepts to measure an *SoA* (frequency, variety of choices, *centralizing* and results of personal effort) it is clear that theoretically, the *Yogasūtra* provides the practitioner with a more promising feeling of ownership over his pursuits.

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Chapter One¹

Introduction

¹ Trivedī, Hemal P. *Sense of Agency: The Mind in Sāṃkhya & Yoga*. Rutgers University, 2017.

“*Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* are different,” children who are unlearned declare. Being firmly established in either, one attains the fruit of both. -*Bhagavadgītā* (5.4)

Sāṅkhya, one of the six schools² of Indian philosophy, has significantly influenced Indian philosophical discourse by introducing its metaphysical dichotomy of *puruṣa* (consciousness) and *prakṛti* (material nature). By successfully grasping *Sāṅkhya*’s metaphysical framework through its evolution-based creation, the school purports that one can subsequently understand the mind and its psychological implications. In other words, prior to understanding the mind in *Sāṅkhya*, one must conceptualize the proposed metaphysics surrounding it. Upon grasping these fundamentals, one can understand the functions of each metaphysical product and the significance of each product in relation to the whole purpose of the mind’s ultimate endeavor in attaining *viññāna*³ (discriminative knowledge).

Yoga, known as the sister school of *Sāṅkhya*, borrows most, if not all of the latter’s metaphysical framework. In systematically explaining the individual’s quest in attaining *samādhi* (restrained mind), *Yoga* introduces and expounds the practice-based paths of *aṣṭāṅga* and *kriyā yoga*. With reference to the mind, while *Sāṅkhya* places its emphasis on *viññāna*, *Yoga* uses this same discriminative wisdom as a stepping stone towards its ultimate goal of stilling the fluctuations of the mind, also known as *samādhi*⁴. Both, however, share the *puruṣa*’s common metaphysical goal of *kaivalya* (aloneness) from material nature. A key difference between the two *darśanas* (schools) is that *Sāṅkhya* will divide the metaphysical mind into three fundamental components (*buddhi*,

² The six formalized schools of Indian philosophy (*ṣaḍ-darśana*) are *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Mīmāṃsā* and *Vedānta*.

³ *Dr̥ṣṭānuśravikaḥ sa hyaviśuddhikṣayātīśayayuktaḥ | tadviparītaḥ śreyān vyaktāvyaktajñānāt ||SK, 2||.*

⁴ *Yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ ||YS, 1.2||.*

ahankāra, manas), while *Yoga* will use a cohesive single unit (*citta*)⁵. In this paper, I will explore if the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* and *Yogasūtra* differ in their respective philosophies and if so, in what domains they vary.

This paper will serve two purposes. First, I will discuss how *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* differ on the topic of mind. Second, we will attempt to answer the question: Which school of thought, represented by their respective authoritative texts, is more likely to generate a practitioner's *sense of agency*⁶? This paper will explore key differences between *Sāṅkhya*'s predominantly metaphysical approach and *Yoga*'s psychological emphasis. More deeply, one can find that *Sāṅkhya* introduces the goal of *vijñāna* (discriminative knowledge) in a highly impersonalized⁷ manner while, on the contrary, *Yoga* introduces the goal of *samādhi* or *nirodha* (stilling) of the mind in a more personalized⁸ manner. What is the difference between an impersonal and personal reading of these schools of Indian philosophy and how do they affect the practitioner's *sense of agency*? Due to *Yoga*'s more egoic and personal approach to *samādhi* and the description of the mind itself, I argue that a practitioner has more of an inclination to identify⁹ with its teachings and subsequently believe that he has a greater *sense of agency* over his actions towards *samādhi*. Conversely, due to *Sāṅkhya*'s less egoic, more passive and impersonal approach to *vijñāna*, the practitioner has less of an inclination towards identifying with its teachings and subsequently feels less of a *sense of agency*. In the

⁵ Burley, 53.

⁶ *Sense of agency (SoA)* is defined as the feeling of being in control of one's decisions (Barlas & Obhi). This term will be further defined.

⁷ The term impersonal refers to language that does not relate to an individual self.

⁸ The term personal refers to language that relates to an individual self.

⁹ Identification refers to the process of being intimately invested by forming a relationship with the text in a personal manner. One is likely to incorporate it into his self-concept (I am a *yogin*).

appendix, I have included preliminary experimental designs that are used to test the proposed theories on *SoA*.

Sources

The primary sources used in this paper are the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*¹⁰(*SK*) of Īśvara Kṛṣṇa and the *Yogasūtra*¹¹(*YS*) of Patañjali. The commentaries for the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* are by Vācaspati Miśra called *Sāṅkhyatattvakaumudī*¹² and Gauḍapāda called the *Gauḍapādabhāṣya*¹³. The commentaries for the *Yogasūtra* are by Vyāsa, Hariharānanda, Rāmānanda Sarasvatī called the *Yogabhāṣya*¹⁴, *Yogasūtra* commentary (General) , and *Yogamañiprabhā*. The secondary sources are *Classical Sāṅkhya: An Interpretation of Its History and Meaning* written by Gerald James Larson, *Free Will, Agency and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy* by Matthew R. Dasti and Edwin F. Bryant, a modern *YS* commentary by Edwin F. Bryant and relevant psychological studies involving *SoA*. As a note, I have utilized other sources and commentaries on the *SK* and *YS* for the purpose of elucidating metaphysical and psychological concepts; however I chose not to include them in the data and analysis of *SoA* to conduct a controlled analysis of two specific texts. Therefore, for the purposes of accurate comparison, I have done a one-to-one comparison by measuring *SoA* in only two texts: *Sāṅkhyakārikā*'s commentary by Vācaspati Miśra (*Sāṅkhyatattvakaumudī*) and the *Yogasūtra*'s commentary by Vyāsa (*Yogabhāṣya*).

In the following sections, I will pick certain *kārikās* and *sūtras* from the *SK* and *YS*, respectively. The criteria I use to choose them is strictly for the design and

¹⁰ The earliest record of the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* is unknown; however, a Chinese translation from Sanskrit was recorded around 569 B.C.E. indicating that the original text emerged at an earlier time (Larson, 147-148)

¹¹ Mass dates the text to be around 400 C.E. while Bryant dates the text around 0-100 C.E.

¹² 9th century C.E. (Larson, 149).

¹³ 11th century C.E. (Larson, 148).

¹⁴ 4th-5th century C.E. (Bryant, xxxviii).

organization of an exposition on the mind and ego in these schools of thought. They are not chosen based on a high or low *SoA*, but instead, picked to provide a thorough analysis on the mind. The potential *SoA* generated from these *kārikās* and *sūtras* will be discussed after the respective philosophies have been established.

Sanskrit Usage and Translation

Besides the names of individuals, Sanskrit terms will be italicized. When introduced, these terms will be accompanied by their English translations for the first few times. After this, the italicized Sanskrit terms will be used much more frequently. I strictly adhere to this principle because the use of Sanskrit terms maintains the integrity of the philosophical worldview and lived traditions at hand and forcing an English translation can significantly dilute the meanings of these terms. This can seriously compromise an accurate understanding of these texts. In addition, while using existing translations and dictionaries as references, I have personally translated all of *kārikās* and *sūtras* from Sanskrit to English to the best of my ability.

Chapter Two¹⁵

The Sense of Agency

¹⁵ Trivedī, Hemal P. *Sense of Agency: The Mind in Sāṃkhya & Yoga*. Rutgers University, 2017.

Sense of Agency

Sense of agency is defined as the feeling of being in control of one's decisions (Barlas & Obhi). One is seen as the author of one's own actions and consequences. This phenomenon can be described as follows: "I feel that I am an agent and have made this decision." Adding onto this definition, it would make sense that decisions, actions and consequences must be attached to an "I," a self-concept. In other words, there must be a *centralized* "I." For instance, the distant verb "run" centralized into "I" run and similarly, the noun mind¹⁶ becomes "my" mind and intellect translates into "his" intellect¹⁷. With action, one must feel that one has made the decision to run. In the sense of possession, one must feel that one is possessing something or someone that is a part of a cohesive "I".

In the academic field of psychology, an *SoA* is often studied by the *intentional binding effect (IBE)* which refers to the relationship between a perceived voluntary action and its perceived effect. Specifically, *intentional binding* is the temporal attraction between the perceived time of a voluntary action and the effect¹⁸ (Haggard & Tsakiris, 2009; Moore & Obhi, 2012).

The *intentional binding effect* is linked to a *sense of agency* (Moore & Haggard, 2010). It is "...the subjective compression of the temporal interval between a voluntary action and its external sensory consequence" (Moore & Obhi, 2012). In other words,

¹⁶ At times the term "mind," will be written simply as mind or mind. When it is not bold, it is referring to a general term for mind often associated with *Sāṅkhya* because there is not a Sanskrit equivalent for the mind consisting of the intellect, ego and mind. When it refers to the specific third part of the mind (*manas*), then it will be written in bold. The only other time mind will be written in bold is when it is affiliated with *yoga* because the word *citta* is also related to the word mind.

¹⁷ The terms 'his', 'your', 'my' all have a *centralized* 'I' as a common root. For example, 'His' clearly does not represent my personal feeling of agency, but it explains another individual's sense of I'ness attributed to something else.

¹⁸ For example, the time between a perceived voluntary action (moving hands together) and a result (a clap) can indicate *intentional binding*. The time between this, more specifically, the attraction between this cause and effect is known as *intentional binding*.

greater *intentional binding* involves tightening the gap between times of the perceived action and result. Therefore, the greater the *intentional binding* (tighter gap) the greater one's *sense of agency* will be. Most importantly, the definition uses the word "subjective". It is not the actual time difference between the cause and effect, but the subjectively perceived difference between the cause and effect experienced by the participant. The difference is that rather than measuring "what is", a *sense of agency* is reliant on "what feels." This implies that the "what feels" result arriving more quickly after an action will more likely contribute to an individual feeling like an agent¹⁹. In mentally healthy subjects, *SoA* can increase or decrease based on certain circumstances that will be discussed in the following sections. In an extreme case, a loss of an *SoA* is seen in patients with schizophrenia. Schizophrenic patients are known to have a disturbed *SoA* in the sense that they have lost their ability to attribute their own thoughts, inner-speech, covert or overt actions to themselves (Jeannerod, 2009). This expands the definition of *SoA* to include one's authorships over their own thoughts. Therefore, in psychological literature, although *SoA* is associated with a person's feeling of authorship over actions, I would like the reader to keep in mind an expanded definition that includes one's experiences (thoughts and inner speech). The sense of self is an awareness of the self with an additionally awareness of one's actions being one's own with respect to sensations, thoughts, intentions and phenomenal experience within and known only to me (Balconi, 2010). This paper is therefore concerned with the question: Can certain texts generate a *sense of agency* in the practitioner while engaging in his religious practice? That is, when exposed to certain verses, do certain texts influence practitioners to feel a

¹⁹ The next step would be to observe the relationship between the "actual" time difference between the "subjective feeling" time difference. This will not be discussed, but for now the reader can assume that in these experiments, the subjective time difference is used.

stronger sense of authorship over their experiences? If so, what variables or circumstances make a reader feel more or less like an agent?

There will be four main points used to explain the differences between the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* and the *Yogasūtra* with regards to a *sense of agency*.

- I) Frequency²⁰ of Relevant Verses
- II) Variety of Choices²¹
- III) Centralizing Language²² of the Commentators
- IV) Potential Visibility²³ of Results

Premises

The thesis held in this paper within the framework of the exposition on the mind will have four main premises:

- 1) A *sense of agency* may be more likely felt when a practitioner is repeatedly exposed to verses of a specific content. In this case, a consistent exposure to verses that have more psychology & practice-based content may evoke a greater *SoA* than repeated exposure to metaphysical content. A practitioner who is frequently exposed to verses of a certain content will develop a “feel²⁴” about the

²⁰ Frequency refers to the number and repetition of verses pertaining to psychology, practice, psychology/practice, metaphysics and miscellaneous.

²¹ Variety of choices refers to the number of options (practices, loci of meditation, etc.) available to the practitioner, which will be discussed later.

²² Language refers to the impersonal and personal differences in explanations between the commentators (Vācaspati Miśra and Vyāsa). It includes the notion of *centralization*, which is applying a personal “I” to an abstract concept. It also includes the use of the personal pronoun “I” and *ideal terminology* which will be explained.

²³ Visibility asks the question: Can the results of the paths be experienced by the practitioner? Can the results of *Sāṅkhya* be experienced and can the results of *Yoga* be experienced? Overall, it refers to the perceived effects from the causes of one’s actions.

²⁴ The term “feel” is a subjective argument. If I read a text that is predominantly talking about the mind versus a text that discusses material reality outside, I can reasonably argue that I will feel that the former text has a psychological undertone and the latter text has a metaphysical/ontological undertone. This of course, must be validated through data.

whole text having the same nature. A text having a dominance of psychology/practice will be labeled as a psychological text, while one that has a predominance of metaphysics, will have a metaphysical feel. A psychological feel will produce a more personal feel, while a metaphysical feel will be distant. A practitioners *SoA* is not only generated from frequency, but from points 2, 3 and 4 in conjunction with frequency.

- 2) A *sense of agency* may be more likely felt when the practitioner experiences the freedom to choose from a variety of options. Being primed²⁵ with verses that provide the practitioner with more choices, followed by a meditation exercise (*prāṇāyāma*²⁶), the practitioner may feel a greater *SoA*.
- 3) A *sense of agency* may be more likely felt when commentators use language and references that *centralize* metaphysical concepts, ideas, and practices to an individual self as opposed to an external, “out there” entity. The *first-person* pronoun “I” and *ideal terms* will link the individual’s sense of self to the text, resulting in an identification with the text. This identification will invest the practitioner into the world of the text and as a result, he may feel a higher *SoA*. This implies that there is a correlation between one’s linked sense of self (identification) with a specific sense object and *SoA* which will be discussed later. Being primed with verses that have the pronoun “I” and ideal terminology

²⁵ The *priming effect* is a social psychological phenomenon that involves exposing an individual to certain stimuli that implicitly influences their subsequent thoughts, behaviors, judgements, etc. (Molden, 2014); (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000).

²⁶ *Prāṇāyāma*, literally the control of *prāṇa* (life-force, breath), includes a series of disciplined breathing exercises involving exhalation, inhalation, stoppage, etc. In the *Yogasūtra*, *prāṇāyāma* is a key practice for advancement in *yoga*. In the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*, a type of *prāṇāyāma* involves blocking the left nostril with the thumb, inhaling through the right nostril, holding, releasing the thumb from the left nostril and blocking right and exhaling through the left. After this is completed, the right nostril is blocked first, and a similar procedure is followed (Svātmārāma, 2.9).

followed by a meditation exercise (*prāṇāyāma*), the practitioner may feel a greater *SoA*.

- 4) A *sense of agency* may be more likely felt when an individual believes that he can experience the effects and results of his actions. In addition, experiencing the results of certain actions can contribute to a higher *SoA*. Being primed with verses that promise results followed by a meditation exercise (*prāṇāyāma*), the practitioner may feel a greater *SoA*.

A Practitioner's Sense of Self

A fundamental presupposition to any of these premises is this: a practitioner is seen as one who *identifies* with the text as an extension of his sense of self. This identity is intricately linked to the words in the text. A practitioner is then any individual who seeks religious or spiritual meaning in the text through belief, practice, ritual and so on. In the case of this text, a practitioner is one who believes or tries to believe these teachings and subsequently tries to incorporate them into his life as a lifestyle. A psychological study on longitudinal effects of narrative psychotherapy and agency indicate that when one's narrative identity²⁷, sense of self, is gradually exposed to therapeutic intervention, over time, one feels more agency. That is, one feels more control over the way they define themselves and consequently experience significant mental health improvement (Adler, 2012). This clearly demonstrates the interplay between the sense of self and *SoA*. When the sense of self, narrative, is altered in certain ways, *SoA* increases.

²⁷ A *narrative identity* is the identity an individual adopts through an accumulation of life experiences. It is the meaning or story an individual tells himself to understand his life circumstances as his memories are woven together to form a cohesive story (McAdams, 2008).

Goal-related studies demonstrate that the goal an individual chooses determines what specific memories are used in the construction of a self-narrative (McAdams, 2008). In other words, the goals we choose determine how we tell the story of our life, more specifically, what memories are used to construct this story. For instance, if I make the goal of becoming a motivational speaker, in constructing my self-narrative, memories of certain speeches, seminars, and social events may become more salient among other memories when faced with the question of who I am. This demonstrates very clearly that my sense of self, that is, my self-narrative is linked to the goals I choose. The *yogin* or practitioner in constructing his goals through practice-based techniques in the *Yogasūtra*, may also center his self-narrative around the title of a *yogin*²⁸ and use certain memories as well. From this identification, an *SoA* may arise.

When we identify with something, when the sense of self encompasses another individual, object, experience and makes it our own, our sense of control or *SoA* is predicated on our relationship with that object. For example, if X is dating Y, X's sense of self (self-views, etc.) is in a constant interaction with Y's reactions. Through this identification, X's *SoA* is intricately linked to the quality of relationships X has with Y. If Y chooses to be a committed partner, X may feel in control. If Y chooses to leave, X may feel out of control. Overall, with whatever one identifies, ties that sense of self to that sense object and subsequently that sense object can determine the individual's *SoA*. This idea is best demonstrated in *self-verification theory*, which proposes that individuals with certain self-views will actively enter environments that will validate their self-views (Swann, 2012). In romantic relationships, partners with positive self-views will seek partners that will validate them. Surprisingly, partners with negative self-views will also

²⁸ The term *yogin* literally means one who practices *yoga*. *Yogin* will be used interchangeably with the term practitioner.

seek partners who validate their negative views, often running away from partners that offer them positive feedback. This demonstrates that our sense of self is very much linked to our significant others.

Measuring an *SoA* among religious practitioners and the specifics texts they choose to study can perhaps reveal the reasons why these texts are most appealing to them. For instance, the *Yogasūtra* may not only be most popular among aspiring *yogins* because the text delineates a system of practices associated with the school of *Yoga*, but the content of the text can provide practitioners with a sense of authorship over their own lives. For *yogins*, I would argue that the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* is just as important as it informs practitioners of the metaphysical world and framework in which they are functioning. However, theoretically, because it may not provide *yogins* with as much *SoA*, the text may not be as popular among them. A serious implication of studying *SoA* and religious texts is isolating variables that determine **why** practitioners use certain texts.

Frequency

Frequency refers to the number of verses regarding a particular topic that are available to the practitioner, specifically in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* and *Yogasūtra*. The topics²⁹ will include:

a) **Psychology**³⁰

Example: (When the mind is stilled) Then the observer abides in its own nature

||YS, 1.3||.

²⁹ The categorization of these topics is open to debate. I have organized them in what I felt to be the most appropriate fit to the subjects at hand. The following notes indicate that upon encountering verses, how I have categorized them to be the most appropriate fit.

³⁰ The content of psychology-based verses involves states of mind, occurrences within and the subsequent results of these states.

b) **Practice**³¹

Example: Practice becomes firm in foundation when it is done for a long time, uninterruptedly and with respect ||YS, 1.14||.

c) **Psychology/Practice**³²

Example: By practice and detachment, the mind will be stilled ||YS, 1.12||.

d) **Metaphysics**³³

Example: The manifest *prakṛti* is *hetumat* (producible), *anitya* (non-eternal), *avyāpi* (non-pervasive), *sakriya* (active), *aneka* (multiform), *āśrita* (dependent), *liṅga* (serving as a mark (of inference)), *sāvayava* (aggregate of parts) and *paratantra* (subordinate). The unmanifest *prakṛti* is the reverse of this ||SK, 10||.

e) **Miscellaneous**³⁴

Example: Perception, inference and verbal testimony, because of these three, knowledge is established. Established knowledge is of three kinds and from correct knowledge comes correct knowledge of an object ||SK, 4||.

Sāṅkhyakārikā

³¹ The content of practice-based verses involves instructional, optional paths towards a certain liberation-based goal. These verses show the reader how he can act and what results comes from this act.

³² The content of psychology/practice both involves an overlap between the two categories where states of mind or observations are also linked with acts and results.

³³ The content of metaphysical verses involve statements about the reality of the world. The content will often involve dry, detached observations about the material world and its interaction with consciousness.

³⁴ The content of miscellaneous verses concern topics other than the topics listed above such as epistemology, etc.

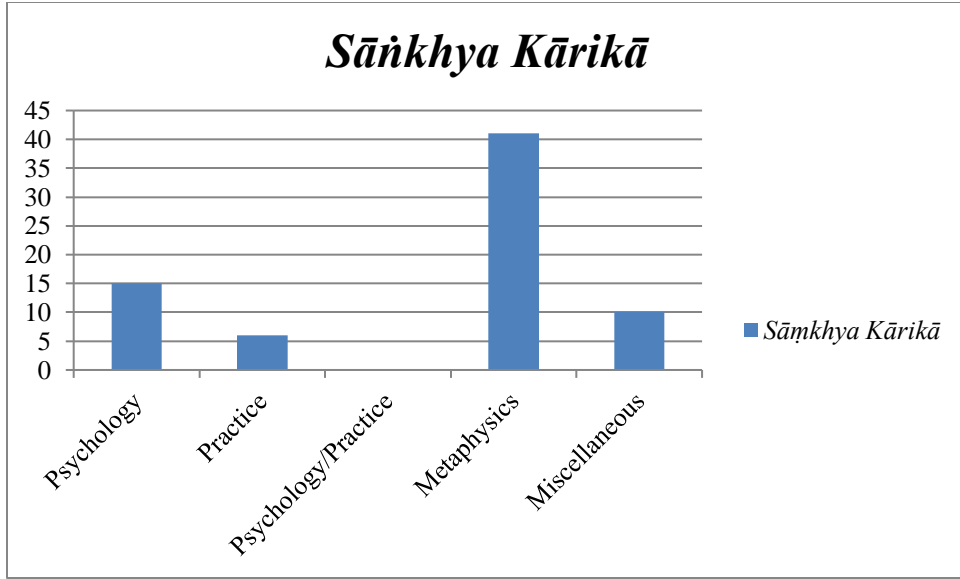


Figure I: Bar graph of the five categories and number of relevant verses in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*

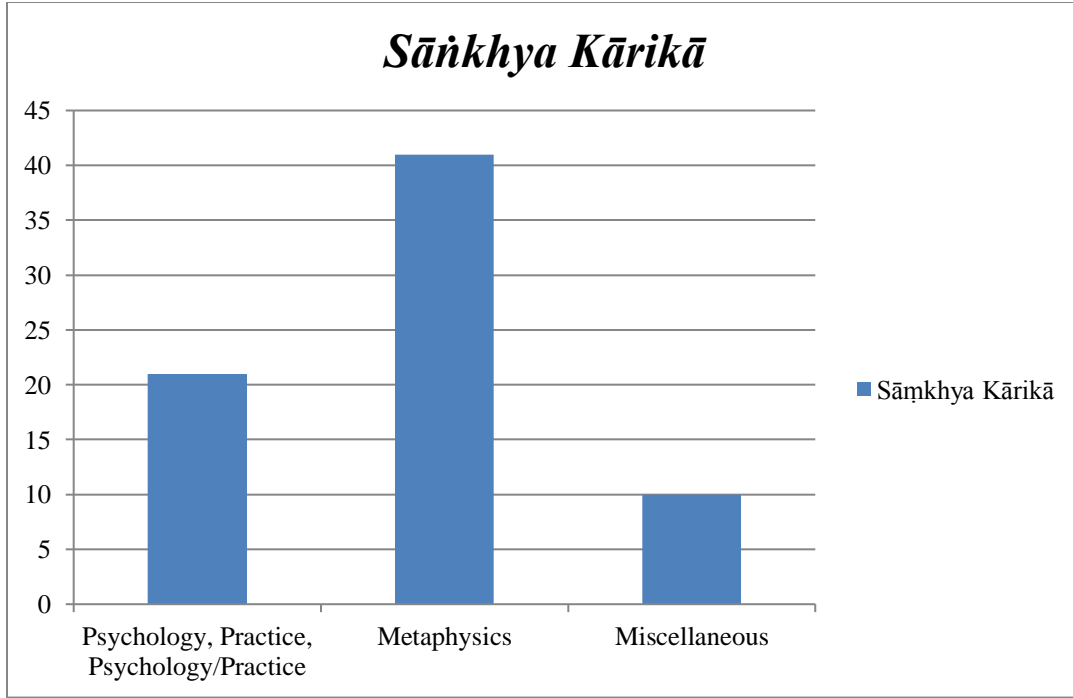
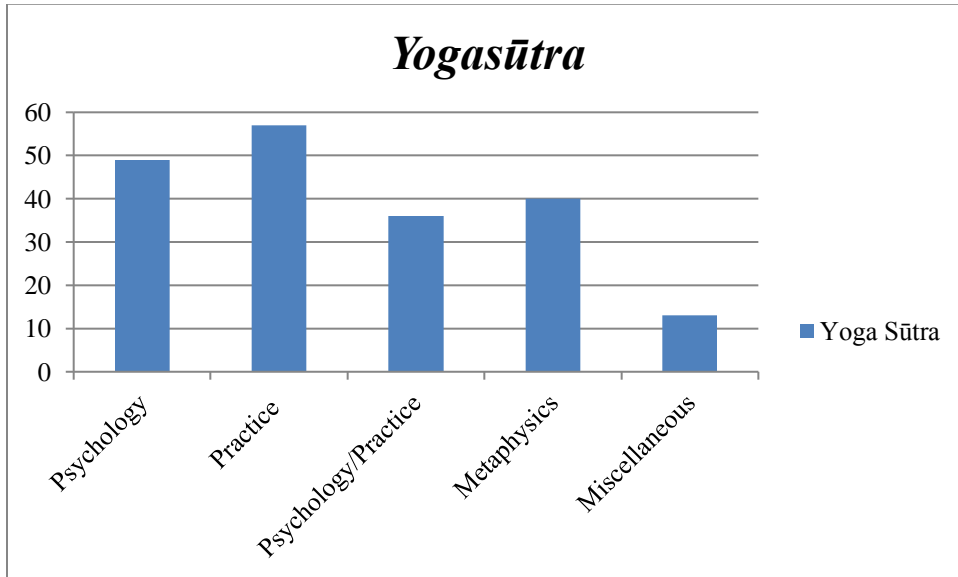


Figure II: Bar graph of the three condensed categories demonstrating the difference between psychology, practice, psychology/practice and metaphysics in the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*.

In the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, there are a total of **seventy-two** *kārikās* (verses). Of the total, there are roughly around **fifteen** (20.83%) concerning psychology³⁵, **six** concerning practice³⁶ (8.33%), **zero** concerning psychology/practice (0%), **forty-one** (56.94%) concerning metaphysics³⁷ and **ten** (13.89%) concerning miscellaneous³⁸ topics. Statistically speaking, this text has an overwhelming emphasis on metaphysics. Furthermore, in figure II we can see that even after placing psychology, practice, and psychology/practice together, there are still **twenty-one** (29.17%) as opposed to **forty-one** *kārikās* (56.94%) concerning the topic of metaphysics, leaving only **ten** as miscellaneous (13.89%). When reading this text, data shows that a practitioner may primarily gain a metaphysical feel because over fifty percent of the text is related to metaphysics. Therefore, it is important to place ourselves in the role of the *yogin*, who is constructing a particular reality from this school of thought.



³⁵ **Psychology:** *Kārikā* 1, 2, 23, 24, 27, 35, 36, 37, 43, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 65

³⁶ **Practice:** *Kārikā* 44, 45, 51, 64, 67, 68

³⁷ **Metaphysics:** *Kārikā* 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 63, 66

³⁸ **Miscellaneous:** *Kārikā* 4, 5, 6, 7, 30, 61, 69, 70, 71, 72

Figure III: Bar graph of the five categories and number of relevant verses in the *Yogasūtra*.

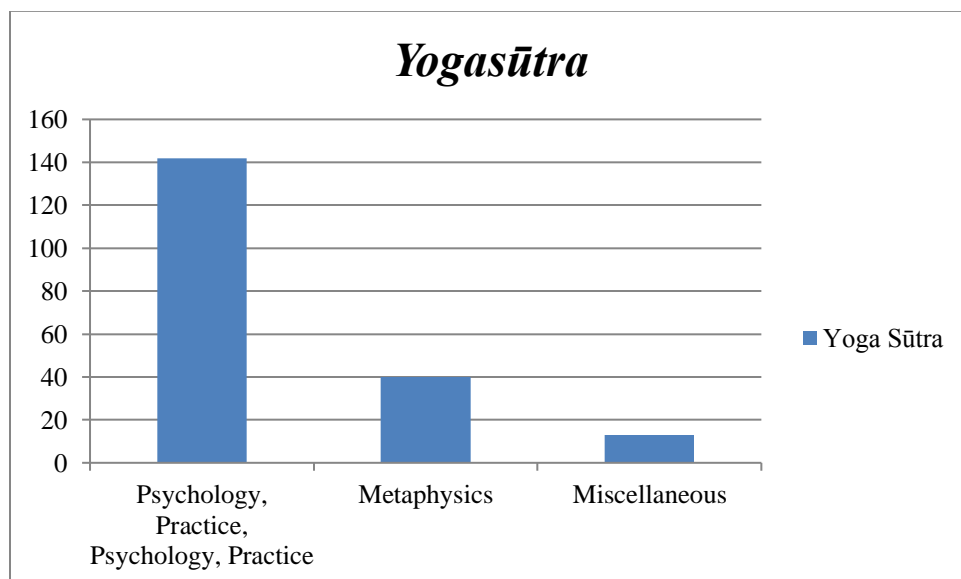


Figure IV: Bar graph of the three condensed categories demonstrating the difference between psychology, practice, psychology/practice and metaphysics in the *Yoga Sūtras*.

In the *Yogasūtra*, there are a total of **195 sūtras**. Among them, **forty-nine** (25.13%) are concerning psychology³⁹, **fifty-seven** (29.23%) concerning practice⁴⁰, **thirty-six** (18.46%) concerning psychology/practice⁴¹, **forty** (20.51%) concerning metaphysics⁴² and **thirteen** (6.67%) concerning miscellaneous⁴³ topics. The *sūtras* concerning psychology and practice taken independently are each greater than

³⁹ **Psychology:** *Sūtra* 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11, 1.15, 1.16, 1.20, 1.41, 1.42, 1.43, 1.44, 1.46, 1.48, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.15, 2.17, 2.23, 2.24, 2.25, 2.26, 2.27, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12, 3.20, 3.37, 4.18, 4.19, 4.20, 4.21, 4.23, 4.25, 4.26, 4.27, 4.29

⁴⁰ **Practice:** *Sūtra* 1.14, 1.21, 1.22, 1.23, 1.28, 1.29, 1.30, 2.1, 2.29, 2.30, 2.31, 2.32, 2.32, 2.34, 2.36, 2.37, 2.38, 2.39, 2.40, 2.43, 2.44, 2.46, 2.47, 2.49, 2.50, 2.51, 2.55, 3.4, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.16, 3.17, 3.18, 3.21, 3.22, 3.23, 3.24, 3.25, 3.26, 3.27, 3.28, 3.29, 3.30, 3.31, 3.2, 3.36, 3.38, 3.39, 3.40, 3.41, 3.42, 3.44, 3.45, 3.47, 3.50, 3.53

⁴¹ **Psychology/Practice:** *Sūtra* 1.12, 1.13, 1.17, 1.18, 1.32, 1.33, 1.34, 1.35, 1.36, 1.37, 1.38, 1.39, 1.47, 2.2, 2.11, 2.28, 2.33, 2.35, 2.41, 2.42, 2.45, 2.48, 2.52, 2.53, 2.54, 3.5, 3.19, 3.33, 3.34, 3.35, 3.43, 3.48, 3.49, 3.52, 4.3, 4.31

⁴² **Metaphysics:** *Sūtra* 1.2, 1.3, 1.19, 1.45, 1.49, 1.5, 1.51, 2.1, 2.12, 2.13, 2.14, 2.16, 2.18, 2.19, 2.20, 2.21, 2.22, 3.14, 3.15, 3.54, 3.55, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, 4.13, 4.14, 4.15, 4.16, 4.17, 4.24, 4.28, 4.32, 4.34

⁴³ **Miscellaneous:** *Sūtra* 1.1, 1.24, 1.25, 1.26, 1.27, 1.40, 3.13, 3.46, 3.51, 4.1, 4.12, 4.22, 4.33

metaphysics. The substantial difference is seen in figure IV, the bar graph, where after being grouped together, there are **142** *sūtras* (72.82%) on psychology, practice, psychology/practice versus **forty** (20.51%) on metaphysics, leaving only **thirteen** (6.67%) to miscellaneous. This indicates that in the *Yogasūtra*, there are over three times more *sūtras* on psychology and practice than those of metaphysics. Furthermore, the first chapter alone has **seventeen** psychology *sūtras* which is greater than *Sāṅkhyakārikā*'s **fifteen** psychology *kārikās*. Chapter one has **eight** practice *sūtras* while the entire *Sāṅkhyakārikā* has only **six**. Finally, chapter one has **thirteen** psychology/practice verses while the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* has **zero** psychology and practice verses. From this data, the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* only quantitatively leads in metaphysics. However, it is crucial to realize that the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* only has **seventy-two** *kārikās* while the *Yogasūtra* has **195** *sūtras*. The latter has more than double the verses, naturally giving the practitioner more exposure to psychology and practice assuming that both texts are read in entirety.

In conclusion, of the **seventy-two** *kārikās* in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, most are metaphysically based and so the reader may get metaphysical feel. With the same logic, since the *Yogasūtra* has more psychology and practice-based verses, the reader may naturally get a more psychological or practice-based feeling. It is certainly possible that while a text is metaphysical, the practitioner can still think psychologically; however, the focus of this study is to quantify the primary and initial feel the practitioner will have when exposed to the text. It is after having been exposed to a certain feeling repeatedly, that the practitioner may feel that he can be more of an agent because psychology/practice-based verses allow an individual to engage in action more efficiently than metaphysics. Having established frequency, the following arguments will demonstrate how the practitioner may feel a higher *SoA*.

Sense of Agency from Option-Variety

This section will measure the relationships between the variety of options available to the *yogin* and his *sense of agency*. With reference to practice-based paths, the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* has very few *kārikās* delineating a path towards the goal of *vijñāna* (discrimination) or *kaivalya* (liberation). *Kārikā* 64 mentions the term *tattvābhyāsāt*, “from the practice of *tattva* (Truth)”, one will attain wisdom of there not being an “I” or individual self. As we will see, compared to the *Yogasūtra*, the term *tattvābhyāsa*, is relatively vague. In the *Yogasūtra*, there are a total of three structured angles or starting points from which a practitioner can choose to begin: *kriyā yoga*, *aṣṭāṅga* (eight limbed) *yoga*, *abhyāsa* (practice) and *vairāgya* (dispassion). All three practices lead to the same end goal of *samādhi*; however, depending on the *yogin*’s preference, he can choose to have a particular starting point⁴⁴. Each path has sub-steps followed by detailed directions in the relevant commentaries. These sub-steps also provide the *yogin* with a multitude of options from which to choose. For example, the *yogin* has the ability to choose the *ālambana* used for meditation. Bryant writes “...*ālambanā*, is the support for the mind and refers to any object upon which the *yogi* has chosen to focus or concentrate the mind” (1.10). As the practice of chanting *AUM* is strongly suggested, the *YS* allows the practitioner to have a wide array of options on what to meditate. The practitioner can

⁴⁴ This argument can certainly spark debate as the three limbed path of *kriyā yoga* is found within the second limb of the eight limbed path of *aṣṭāṅga yoga*. The argument is not that these are different paths but are three separate starting points offered to a practitioner. One can argue that *kriyā yoga* is contained within *aṣṭāṅga yoga*, so why perceive them to be separate starting paths? *Aṣṭāṅga yoga* contains requirements of celibacy, truthfulness, and three other virtues. What is to say of an individual who is not yet ready to perform celibacy, but wants to begin by weakening the *kleśas* (impediments)? This individual is given the option to begin with *kriyā yoga* and perhaps gradually intensify to *aṣṭāṅga yoga*. What is then to be said about *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*? The path of practice and dispassion is offered in chapter one to those who are more firmly rooted in their practice with the predominance of the *sattva guṇa* (Bryant, 169). Chapter two is for practitioners who are at a more undeveloped stage, under the *rajas* and *tamas guṇas* which will be explained later. Therefore, one can choose either *kriyā* or *aṣṭāṅga yoga*. However, a more developed practitioner can choose practice and dispassion or perhaps even lean back on *aṣṭāṅga yoga*. Although this topic is highly debatable, one should remember that these are not different paths, but are different starting points.

choose to meditate on the moon, tip of the nose, a deity, another passion-less mind, etc. More importantly, he has an option to choose to worship *Īśvara*, God, or not. This experience of the freedom to choose, along with many options as starting points may provide the practitioner more of an *SoA*.

How does the ability to choose from a variety of choices contribute to an *SoA*? Studies on choice variety show that “...agency is thought to be strongest in an “environment of opportunities” (Pettit, 2001). In fact, “...it might be expected that agency and freedom are related such that increasing levels of freedom to choose a course of action correspond to increasing levels of agency” (Barlas & Obhi, 2013). In plain words, more freedom to choose⁴⁵ along with a variety of options equate to more of an *SoA*.

In a Barlas & Obhi’s study on *SoA* among a variety of choices, researchers questioned whether more action alternatives produce greater levels of *intentional binding* than a limited choice set. In other words, do more action alternatives produce greater levels of an *SoA* than less action alternatives? Participants were required to press a button (on a seven button pad). They recorded two things: their perceived time of key press followed by an auditory tone after their key press. There were three varying conditions. The “no choice condition” forced them to press one button. The “medium choice condition” allowed them to choose from three buttons. The “high choice condition” allowed them to choose from any of the seven buttons. The results demonstrate that “...the degree of overall binding⁴⁶ was greatest when participants had the highest level of

⁴⁵ Within the psychological literature on *SoA*, this was the only study I could find that addressed choice in option variety and *SoA*. In future studies, I will conduct a more thorough literature review.

⁴⁶ Binding once again indicates the (timing) relationship between the perceived action and the result. The closer the binding, (perceived timing between the two) the more likely to produce an *SoA*. In this case, the timing between the two, or attraction between the two (action and result) seemed closer when there were more action alternatives.

action alternatives to choose from” (Barlas & Obhi, 2013). Both the “medium” and “low choice conditions” show much lower binding than the “high choice condition”. Thus, results show that a greater degree of choice is associated with greater intentional binding, which in turn means, a greater *sense of agency*. The experimental design provided in the appendix will propose that after being primed with verses that provide more choices versus less choices, followed by a brief meditation exercise, the *yogin* is hypothesized to feel a greater *SoA*.

Language of the Commentators (*Centralizing*)

As the inquiry into the mind proceeds, a key determinant of agency is revealed by the language used by the commentators in the respective commentaries of the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* and the *Yogasūtra*. *Centralization*⁴⁷ or *centralizing* is the phenomenon of attracting and invoking the reader’s self-concept by certain terminology used in the texts. There are ways language can be *centralized*:

1. First person pronouns (“I”),
2. *Ideal terms* that are linked to third person pronouns such as “the *yogin*” followed by “he.” This occurs by seeing the *yogin* as a role model figure.
3. *Personalization* which involves applies an egoic tone to a broadly, impersonal metaphysical statement.

The following are examples of the three methods.

1. “**I** am practicing *Yoga*.”
2. “The ***yogin*** is not distracted from material pleasures, **he** is unphased.”

⁴⁷ Synonyms are *personalizing*, *centering*, *egoic*, *individuating*.

3. *Sūtra* 1.33⁴⁸: The *citta* (mind) becomes serene/clear by treating sense objects (people) that are sinful, virtuous, painful and pleasurable with indifference, joy, compassion and friendliness, respectively.

For example, in the commentary of *Sūtra* 1.16, it states

“When detachment appears in the shape of clarified knowledge, the *Yogin*, with his realization of the nature of the Self, thinks thus: “I have got whatever is to be got; the afflictions which have been reduced, the continuous chain of birth and death, bound by which men are born and die, and dying are born again, has been broken.” (39).

Here we have the three examples: use of the *first-person* pronoun, an *ideal term* and also the idea of discrimination being attached to a *centralized* individual.

The first form of centralization involves the practitioner in an intimate manner by invoking his identity by the word “I.” A practitioner whose sense of self is already identified with the text as a source of inspiration, will be further identify with the text by the use of the word “I”. I argue for a premise that word “I”, having a highly personal valence, will further link the practitioner to the text causing him to identify with the statement at hand. The self has first person content and is reproduced by the use of the “I” pronoun (Balconi, 2010). This is demonstrated by the *immunity principle* which states that when a person uses the first-person pronoun “I” he cannot make a mistake about the person being referred to because it is always himself. This indicates that self-reference is an immediate and non-observational that does include a cognitive process. Therefore, self-reference using the pronoun “I” is an immediate and non-observational process which is the pre-reflective origin for actions, experiences and thoughts. In fact, schizophrenic individuals who suffer from thought insertion demonstrate a loss of sense of agency through a process of misidentification (Balconi, 2010). For example, when

⁴⁸ *Maitrīkaruṇāmuditopekṣāṇām sukhaduḥkhaṇyāpūṇyaviṣayāṇāmbhāvanātaścittaprasādanam ||YS, 1.33||.*

experiencing a thought, patients are missing the “I am” or “mine” part of the experience, leading to the belief that the thought is from elsewhere. Therefore, as long as there is the question of *SoA*, there is an immediate, non-cognitive, link to a certain sense of self. Edwards and Holtman’s study on the first person singular pronoun “I” have demonstrated that the pronoun “I” is correlated with depression (2017).

In addition, Edwards and Holtman cite several studies stating that persuading depressed individuals to use less first person pronouns can alleviate the effects of depression and negative emotions. For this reason, the authors argue that the first-person pronoun use is considered a linguistic marker for depression. The fact that this correlation exists, demonstrates that language is somehow linked to one’s conception of one’s sense of self (identity). Therefore, by using the pronoun “I” one is invoking one’s sense of self. Similarly, by being exposed to the pronoun “I”, one’s sense of self is being evoked.

The second form of *centralization* also involves the reader’s self-concept but does it through certain *ideal terminology*. For the invested practitioner, the term *yogin*, meaning one who practices *yoga*, perceives the ideal *yogin* as a role model. For instance, in the *Bhagavadgītā* (*BG*), Kṛṣṇa⁴⁹ says to Arjuna⁵⁰ that whatever a great man does, other men also follow and whatever standard he sets, the world follows it⁵¹. The idea of a role model is one who sets the standard for others. In addition, the manner in which a *yogin* walks, talks, breathes, etc. is a great subject inquiry for practitioners who strive for *yoga* and is encouraged to be imitated. Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa how does a person who has overcome the influence of *prakṛti* (three *guṇas*) act? Kṛṣṇa responds that this individual

⁴⁹ Kṛṣṇa, also known as *Bhagavān*, in the *Bhagavadgītā*, is a divine protagonist that counsels and comforts the main character Arjuna, as the latter prepares for a war.

⁵⁰ Arjuna is the main character of the *BG* who seeks the counsel of Kṛṣṇa as a *guru* to guide his decision making process in this war.

⁵¹ *Yadyadācarati sreṣṭhastatadevetaro janaḥ | sa yatpramāṇam kurute lokastadanuvartate ||BG, 3.21||*.

is one who is alike in pleasure in pain, situated in his self, looks upon stone and gold as the same, reacts similarly towards positive and negative things and is immune to praise and blame⁵². He is the same in honor and dishonor, same to friend and enemy and abandoned enterprises is one who has overcome material nature⁵³. In addition, Kṛṣṇa lists twenty-five⁵⁴ characteristics that a divine type of man should have. Studies on the effects of role models on self-perceptions of success indicate that role models have an impact on the self under two conditions:

1. A role model will either positively or negatively influence an individual's self only under the condition that the latter compares himself to the former. That is, a striving *yogin* who reads the *Yogasūtra* must compare himself to the ideal *yogin* in order for his self to be influenced (Major, Testa & Bylsma, 1991).
2. Whether the influence of the role model on the individual is positive or negative depends on the perceived attainability of the role model's success. If individual perceives the role model's success as attainable, he will be self-enhanced. Conversely, if the role model's success appears unattainable, he will feel self-deflated and demoralized (Lockwood & Kunda, 2000).

These findings indicate a crucial point. An individual's role model is linked to his sense of self. In other words, whoever you admire as a role model and strives to imitate can influence your perceived sense of self. Therefore, if the aspiring *yogin* admires the

⁵² *Samaduḥkhasukhaḥ svasthaḥ samaloṣṭāśmakāñcanaḥ | tulyapriyāpriyo dhīrastulyanindātmasaṁstutiḥ* ||BG, 14.24||.

⁵³ *Mānāpamānāyostulyastulyo mitrārapikṣayoḥ | sarvārambhaparitāgī guṇātītaḥ sa ucyate* ||BG, 14.25||.

⁵⁴ *Abhayaṁ sattvasaṁśuddhirjñānāyogavyavasthitiḥ | dānaṁ damaśca yajñaśca svādhyāyastapa ārjavam* ||BG, 16.1||; *ahiṁsā satyamakrodhastyāgaḥ śāntirapaiśunam | dayābhūteṣvaloluptvaṁ mārdaṁ hiracāpalam* ||BG, 16.2||; *tejaḥ kṣmā dhṛtiḥ śaucamadroho nātimānitā | bhavanti sampaḍaṁ daivīmabhijātasya bhārata* ||BG, 16.3||.

ideal *yogin*, he can either feel enhanced or depleted based on his perception of the attainability of his role model's ideal.

As mentioned before, in narrative formation, the goal an individual makes determines the specific memories used to define the currently self (McAdams, 2008). When the *ideal term* is invoked through goal directed behavior, the sense of self is evoked. This *ideal term* will also have an implied *non-ideal* opposite which roughly called a non-*yogin*, which will also involve the self-concept but will deter the practitioner for wanting to be that. In both cases, ego identification occurs but one motivates while the other pushes away. Either way, the practitioner is intimately involved in what he wants to be and what he does not want to be.

The texts set the standards for who the practitioner should be and who he should not be. For instance, the *YS* often states that a *yogin* should be X and a non-*yogin* is not X. At times, the *YS* will indicate only what a *yogin* should be, but from this knowledge, one can infer what he should not be. The practitioner, believing himself to be a *yogin* or wanting to be a *yogin*, may personally invest himself in the text. Psychological studies in narrative formation seem to support the idea that a *yogin* interested in pursuing *yoga* as a goal, will be faced with more goals and obstacles and may subsequently shift around his self-concept based on what he reads. As sense of self and *SoA* are linked, this identification may then lead the individual into feeling that he is an agent. At times, an *ideal term* is not used directly but implied. For instance, the term “***knower of truth***” is used in a certain *sūtra*, to demonstrate a desirable quality. Various titles are used and indirectly demonstrate what is preferable and not preferable for the practitioner. Although this may cause identification, I would hypothesis that the *ideal terms* that are more frequently employed provide a more powerful identifying effect. Other times, the term

“he” may be used without a reference to a title. Finally, sense of self and *SoA* are linked as the more an individual identifies with something, the more he is likely to feel an *SoA* over that experience, action, belief as “his.”

The third form of *centralization* involves bringing to life a distanced metaphysical statement by implying an “I”. The *sūtra* states that the mind that cultivates X will be in a certain state. However, the word “cultivation” implies that there is an “I” or an individual self that is doing the cultivating. It is not just an inanimate mechanical mind doing action but rather, an implied agent behind these actions that utilizes the mind to cultivate these feelings. Within the *Yogasūtra*, there is great number of these types of verses and statements in the commentary. In a very general sense *centralizing* can refer to applying practices and states of mind to the individual. For instance, “The mind is inclined towards *āsana*,” versus “One’s mind is inclined towards *āsana*,” indicates the difference between an impersonal and a *centralized* personal reading, respectively. In a general sense, *centralizing* involves the addition of an “I” to a particular statement regarding practice, belief, action, etc. One must pay clear attention to sentences that are *centralized* because through this process, metaphysical concepts are given an “I” and are transformed into psychological concepts after being attributed to the individual.

Specifically, it is the idea of focusing the metaphysical interplay between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* onto a specific person. For instance, in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, the *kārikās* and commentaries generally have a detached explanation such as: “the intellect is ascertainment”. This statement refers to the metaphysical entity of *buddhi* and simply defines it. In a simplified manner, the process of *centralizing* will change this phrase to: one’s *buddhi* has ascertainment or an aspirant’s *buddhi* has ascertainment.

The reader will see certain verses on the mind where the commentators will explicitly use examples in relation to a person and others that will not. It will be clear how the verses that do *centralize* will become more personal to the reader than the ones that do not. When the mind is described in relation to an individual rather than itself as a metaphysical entity, one will gain a more relatable experience. This phenomenon can be easily noticed by the use of the words: “one”, “his”, “*yogin*,” etc. The addition of these words indicates an *egoic* self and more responsibility on the practitioner. It is important to note that the *SK* certainly has *kārikās* and commentaries that provide examples of *personalizing*, but the reader will see that the *YS* will have more of these. The reader will see there is moderate *centering* in the verses specifically on the mind in both the *SK* and *YS*⁵⁵. Gradually, one will see drastic *centralizing* occurring when practices are introduced in the first, second and third chapters of the *Yogasūtra*. The following format will include verses from both texts followed by their respective explanations on *centralization*. The experimental design provided in the appendix will propose that after being primed with verses that provide the personal pronoun “I” and *ideal terminology*, followed by a brief meditation exercise, the *yogin* is hypothesized to feel a greater *SoA*.

Sense of Agency and the Results of Personal Effort

If a *sense of agency* is the feeling of having the ability to make a decision, one must at some point know that a decision has been made either by witnessing, hearing or simply being aware that when there is an action, there is a result. Without being the slightest bit aware that there is a result from the decision, the identity of being an agent is questionable. On studying implications of results on *SoA*, Haggard and Tsakiris argue that...“More generally, the “I did that” aspect of the sense of agency depends on our

⁵⁵ Verses not directly related to the mind will have more *centering*.

ability to predict what will follow from each specific motor act we perform. “ (2009). In the following section, the link between *SoA* and results will be explained.

With regards to the results of one’s efforts, an *SoA* will be measured in two ways.

1. Promised Verifiable Results
2. Promised Unverifiable Results

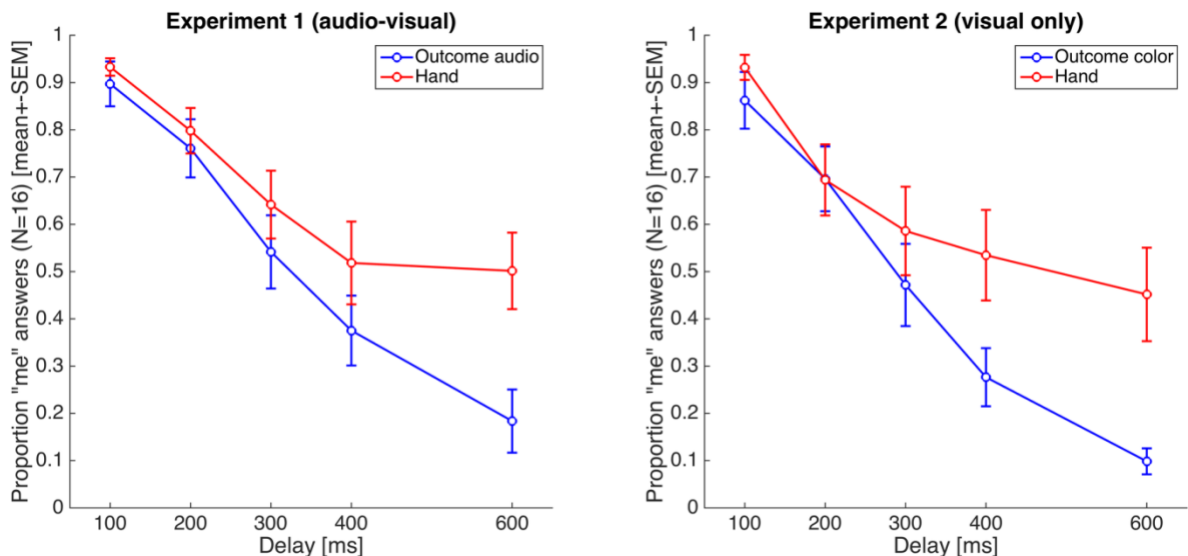
Promised Verifiable Results

To be an agent or to feel more like an agent is to see, hear, touch, smell or taste the result of one’s actions. In David, Nicole, et al’s research into outcomes and *SoA*, varying delayed responses were measured with the moment an action was taken.

Researchers found that...

“Previous studies of the sense of agency manipulated the predicted sensory feedback related either to movement execution *or* to the movement’s outcome, for example by delaying the movement of a virtual hand or the onset of a tone that resulted from a button press. Such temporal sensorimotor discrepancies reduce the sense of agency” (David, Skoruppa, Gulberti, Schultz, & Engel, 2016).

The details of the experiment need not be explained, but the key piece of information to note is the difference between the perceived action and perceived result and its link to *SoA*.



The left chart taken from this study shows that there is an inverse correlation between the delay of a response and an *SoA*: the greater the delay, the less of an *SoA* that is felt by the actor. This paper is not presented for the purpose of the presence or absence of a delay. Instead, the focus is on the idea that a result of a perceived action (whether delayed or not) can make an individual feel that he is an agent to varying degrees⁵⁶. Verifiable, promised results involve *sūtras* that indicate to the practitioner that after practicing, certain meditative states, moods, feelings of compassion, will emerge. The way to test these claims is to appeal to psychological studies that validate or falsify these claims.

How do one's perceived results followed by actions indicate one's *SoA* in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* and *Yogasūtra*? Do certain paths provide visible, tangible or feeling based results that allow the practitioner to feel that he is an agent? As the paper progresses, I will present and analyze cause and effect, action and result verses that can generate an *SoA* in practitioners.

Promised Unverifiable Results

We must however, become very much aware of a dramatic difference between an *SoA* achieved through a promised, verifiable result versus an *SoA* achieved through a promised, unverifiable result. In the *Yogasūtra*, many *sūtras* promise empirically unverifiable results that can prove immensely difficult to measure and/or unfalsifiable by nature. For instance, in *kriyā yoga* the practitioner must worship a particular deity. In doing so, he will establish contact with this deity. This indicates to the practitioner, that if he chooses and worships (potential *SoA*) a particular deity, the deity will then respond.

⁵⁶ The perceived result is indicated by the sound of a tone that is followed by a successfully perceived action indicated by clicking. Therefore, one feels more of a *sense of agency* when one hears the sound after the click, but more specifically, when one hears that sound more closely in time to the click.

For empirical purposes, this result is unfalsifiable. Although the practitioner may feel a deep, longing connection with a deity that seems to be helping him along a particular path, the result itself is a promised result that for our sake, may never happen. Thus, in these cases where certain states of mind are promised, we must specifically measure the correlation value between an *SoA* and promised results, rather than the result itself. Thus, we would have to ask: “How is a *sense of agency* affected when the practitioner is promised a result for his actions and subsequently engages in that action?”

The Role of Belief in Verifiable/Unverifiable Results

I hypothesize that although unverifiable results are indeed unverifiable, an *SoA* is positively correlated with how much the practitioner **believes** that the result will occur. Before even addressing whether a result is verifiable or unverifiable, the scientist must measure to what degree the practitioner believes the result will realistically occur. I argue that the more a practitioner believes the result to occur, the more he is invested in the result and will therefore feel an *SoA* when he practices (reads, meditates, etc.). Therefore, although promised results may invoke a general idea of *SoA* to the practitioner by default, they may **only** invoke a more powerful *SoA* to the extent that the practitioner believes in the result. For instance, if the practitioner is exposed to the idea that if he meditates, he will experience a clearer and calmer mind, he is left with the options of believing, not believing or remaining impartial to the idea. I would argue that if he does engage in the practice, his engagement reveals an underlying belief that “there may be something” to the practice. If the belief is strong, he will experience a high *SoA* depending on verifiable or unverifiable result. If the belief is weak, *SoA* may consequently be weakly invoked. In the case of unverifiable results, if the belief is strong, even if no tangible result arrives, he may still feel a strong *SoA*. Commonly, many Hindus are motivated by the idea of *karma*

which teaches that one's life circumstances are determined by one's prior actions.

Although proving *karma* to be empirically verifiable may prove to be highly difficult, believers still keep this idea in mind when acting in the world. A Hindu may feel an *SoA* after getting a raise, thinking it to be the result of a previously virtuous action. Also, he may feel an *SoA* right after a virtuous act like donating to charity and think "I have done a virtuous act and I may receive a virtuous reward in the future."

Thus far, I have outlined a theoretical proposal for how belief may be related to *SoA*, but these ideas, when tested with rigorous experimental methodology, may provide insight into this phenomenon. The experimental design provided in the appendix will propose that after being primed with verses that provide promised results, followed by a brief meditation exercise, the *yogin* is hypothesized to feel a greater *SoA*.

Future studies and analysis are required to understand this topic further. One may argue that a result not coming forth can depress an individual and cause a decrease in *SoA*. I would disagree and state that it is in fact a higher *SoA* followed by the lack of a result that may result in depression or dejection. Nevertheless, future studies need to test this idea. We will now explain *Sāṅkhya* metaphysics to situate the relevant terminology and reproduce the dry, distant metaphysical feel a practitioner will face when reading.

Chapter Three⁵⁷

The Sense of Agency in the Sāṅkhyakārikā

⁵⁷ Trivedī, Hemal P. *Sense of Agency: The Mind in Sāṃkhya & Yoga*. Rutgers University, 2017.

***Sāṅkhya* Metaphysics**

There are two fundamental entities in *Sāṅkhya*: *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* is a changeless⁵⁸, uncaused⁵⁹, eternal⁶⁰, and multitudinous⁶¹ witness⁶² (sentience)⁶³. The term sentience, the ability to feel or experience, is often equated with the term consciousness which is a term used to define *puruṣa* as well (Larson, 171). The second entity is known as *prakṛti*, translated as primordial nature or primal matter⁶⁴. *Prakṛti* exists in two forms,

⁵⁸ Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 18.

⁵⁹ Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 3.

⁶⁰ Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 11.

⁶¹ Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 18.

⁶² Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 19.

⁶³ Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 19.

⁶⁴ Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 3.

unmanifest and manifest. *Prakṛti* in its unmanifest form is known as *avyakta*, *mūlaprakṛti* and *pradhāna*⁶⁵ (Larson, 161). In its unmanifest form, *prakṛti* is uncaused, eternal, pervasive, inactive, and uniform⁶⁶. Some of its qualities are much like those of *puruṣa*⁶⁷ (except sentience). Generally, *prakṛti* differs from *puruṣa* because it contains *guṇas*⁶⁸ and a manifest form.

These two uncaused entities are in interplay with one another. When *puruṣa* comes near⁶⁹ or interacts with *prakṛti*, unmanifest *prakṛti* begins to manifest, also known as creation. In other words, *avyakta prakṛti* becomes *vyakta*, and the physical world begins to form starting from the subtlest form of matter to the most gross. The manifest form of *prakṛti* is producible, non-eternal, non-pervasive, active, multiform, dependent, aggregate of parts and subordinate (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 10). The terms *mūlaprakṛti*, *avyakta* and *pradhāna* no longer apply and the word *vyakta* is now used.⁷⁰

The first evolute that emerges as *vyakta prakṛti* is *buddhi*. *Buddhi* is known as the faculty of will and intelligence, specifically the ability to discriminate between *puruṣa* (consciousness) and *prakṛti* (material nature) (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 23)⁷¹. As the

⁶⁵ *Pradhāna*, like *prakṛti* is also translated as primordial nature (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 11).

⁶⁶ Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 38.

⁶⁷ Vācaspati Miśra writes that *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are similar because they are uncaused, unchanged and eternal (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 11). *Puruṣa* has other qualities like solitariness and neutrality which indicate a lack of the three *guṇas*, which also means a lack of pleasure, pain or delusion (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 19). Note: While the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* use terms like witness, isolated, neutral, spectator and non-agent (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 19), it does not mention the words: eternality, infinite, uncaused, etc. The latter listed qualities about *puruṣa* are primarily what the commentators say about it.

⁶⁸ The three *guṇas* will be explained in the subsequent section.

⁶⁹ It is not clear how *puruṣa* comes together or near with *prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* is seen as the animator and initiator of the material evolution, however, it is unclear how an immaterial substance can interact with a material substance. This problem is not discussed in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* or *Sāṅkhyasūtra*. Larson states that “Little attention is given in the *Kārikā* as to how the two basic principles – i.e., *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* – come together, although the text does tell us that they are together and what happens when they come together” (Larson, 172). Both entities are eternally present, however, it is unclear how *puruṣa* initiates the process for *prakṛti* to begin material evolution. The *Sāṅkhyasūtra* claims that passion (*rajas*) is the reason why material creation occurs (Vijñānabhikṣu, *Sūtra* 9), however, this is also unclear as well.

⁷⁰ The common term of *prakṛti* is still used to describe the manifest form in addition to *vyakta*.

⁷¹ Deeper functions of the internal organs will be explained later.

evolution of *prakṛti* proceeds, the next form of matter is *ahaṅkāra*, or ego which is a sense of I'ness or individuality (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 24). From *ahaṅkāra*, the evolution of *prakṛti* follows two distinct routes. An *ahaṅkāra* under the influence of *sattva* produces the eleven sense organs separated into organs of knowledge and organs of action (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 25). The organs of knowledge are known as the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin. The organs of action are known as speech, the hand, feet, excretory organ and organ of generation. The eleventh organ is known as the *manas*, which is both an organ of knowledge and action” (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 27).

The *ahaṅkāra* under the influence of *tamas* will produce the five primary, subtle elements (*tanmātras*): sound, touch, color, taste and odor (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 38). From these, form the gross elements (*mahābhūtas*): *ākāśa* (ether), air, fire, water and earth. *Kārikā* 38 clarifies that these gross elements can be calm, turbulent or deluding depending on the element's *guṇa*. For instance, a particular “thing” made of the fire element when under *sattva* is calm, but when under *tamas* is heavy. The notion of *guṇa* will be explained later.

Sound----->Ether

Touch----->Air

Color----->Fire

Taste----->Water

Odor----->Earth

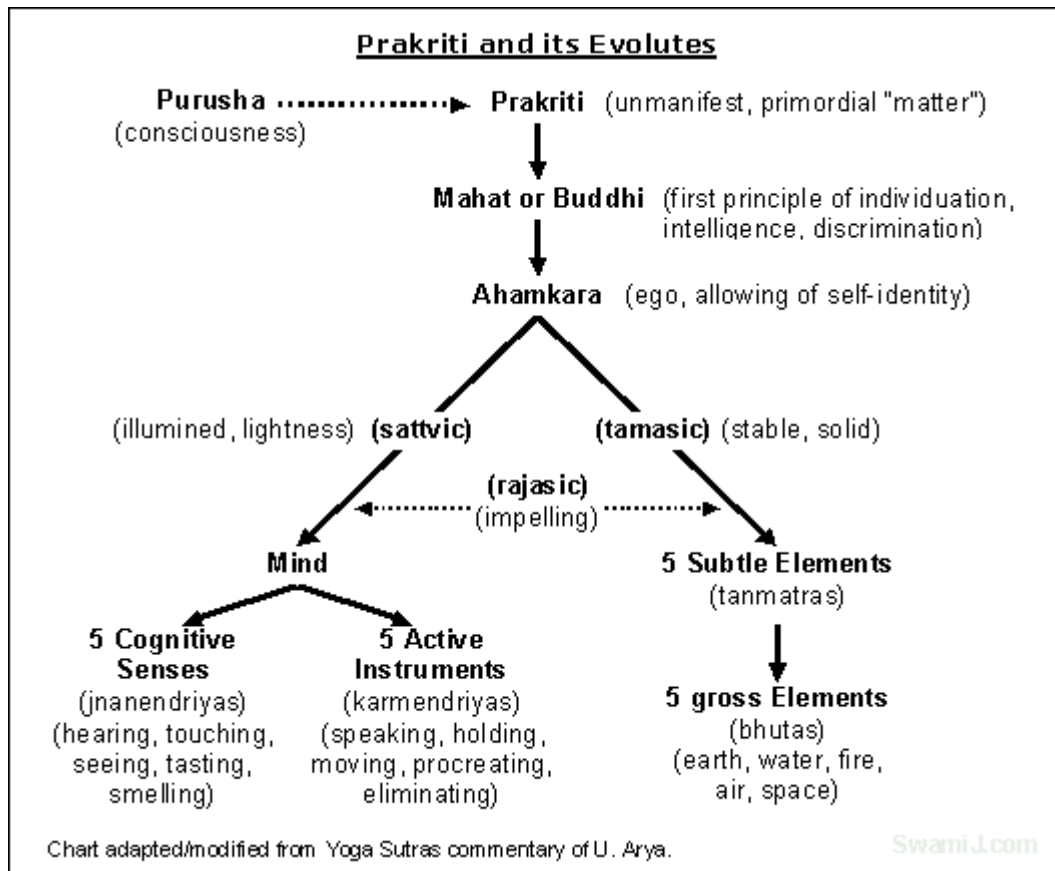


Figure 1⁷²: Chart from *Yogasūtra* commentary of U. Arya. This chart is an accurate representation of the metaphysical framework used in both *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*.

A proper understanding of *Sāṅkhya* metaphysics will familiarize the reader with the fundamental concepts underlying its philosophy and also provide a feel of the impersonal mechanisms used to describe the interaction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. Once again, because the language in the *SK* is decentralized from an individual ego, a practitioner can feel a dry distance from the text that describes the constituents of material nature.

Three Internal Organs

⁷² This chart accurately demonstrates the 25 *tattvas* through the evolution of *prakṛti*.

Sāṅkhyakārikā 22⁷³: From *prakṛti* (material nature) evolves *buddhi* (intellect). From that (*buddhi*) evolves the *ahaṅkāra* (I-principle). From that (*ahaṅkāra*) evolves the set of sixteen (eleven sense organs and five *tanmātras*. From the five of this set of sixteen [*tanmātras*], evolves the five elements [*mahābhūtas*].

The mind⁷⁴ in *Sāṅkhya* is essentially composed of three parts:

1. *Buddhi* (Intellect)
2. *Ahaṅkāra* (I-principle, ego)
3. *Manas* (Ruminating mind)

These internal organs are under the umbrella of *vyakta prakṛti* (manifest matter).

Before explaining the three internal organs, we must be familiar with the differences between unmanifest *prakṛti* and manifest *prakṛti*.

Sāṅkhyakārikā 10⁷⁵: The manifest *prakṛti* is *hetumat* (producible), *anitya* (non-eternal), *avyāpi* (non-pervasive), *sakriya* (active), *aneka* (multiform), *āśrita* (dependent), *liṅga* (serving as a mark (of inference)), *sāvayava* (aggregate of parts) and *paratantra* (subordinate). The unmanifest *prakṛti* is the reverse of this.

Vācaspati Miśra explains that the manifest is producible, which simply means that it is a product, or it can be produced from a cause. On the other hand, the unmanifest is unproduced because it is eternal and is itself, the cause. Conversely, the manifest is non-eternal or *anityam*, because it can be created and revert back to its original form

⁷³ *prakṛtermahāmīstato 'haṅkārastasmādgāṇaśca ṣoḍaśakah | tasmādapi ṣoḍaśakātpañcabhyaḥ pañca bhūtāni* ||SK, 22||.

⁷⁴ Here, mind is used loosely as a general, umbrella term. In fact, the word mind would more closely related with the term *manas*, but in this situation is used to describe all three internal organs: *buddhi*, *ahaṅkāra* and *manas*.

⁷⁵ *Hetumadanityamavyāpi sakriyamanekamāśritaḥ liṅgam | sāvayavaṃ paratantraṃ vyaktaṃ viparītamavyaktaṃ* ||SK, 10||.

(unmanifest *prakṛti-avyakta*)⁷⁶ and thus undergoes change. Manifest *prakṛti* is non-pervasive, that is, it does not pervade all of the evolutes. The unmanifest, on the other hand, is pervasive and exists within all of its effects (manifestations) (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 10). *Prakṛti* can pervade its effects, but the effects cannot pervade the causes. Thus, the causes are pervasive, while the effects are not pervasive. For example, *buddhi*, *ahankāra* and *manas* cannot pervade *pradhāna*, but *pradhāna* can pervade the internal organs. To describe activity, Vācaspati Miśra writes that *buddhi* and the other effects are mobile because they give up the body and occupy another body⁷⁷ (*Kārikā* 10). *Pradhāna*, or *avyakta prakṛti* does not do this, as it is pervasive, it does not move. The manifest is multiform because each individual has his own internal organs, thus, there is not a single *buddhi* or *ahankāra*. Also, the manifest is dependent because its existence depends on its previous cause (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 10). We will leave the other characteristics as they are unnecessary to define as of now⁷⁸.

The Three *Guṇas*

Prakṛti, in its manifest and unmanifest form, is composed of the three *guṇas*, usually translated as the qualities of matter. These *guṇas* are metaphysical qualities that are in constant interplay with one another (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 11).

⁷⁶ To describe impermanence, Vācaspati Miśra describes that the manifest can be subject to disappearance into its material cause (*Kārikā* 10).

⁷⁷ This describes the process of rebirth.

⁷⁸ Why is it important to know these categories? The *Sāṅkhyakārikā* states that if one knows these categories one will be closer to the goal of discriminative wisdom and subsequently, the removal of suffering. Vācaspati Miśra writes that knowing the *buddhi*'s properties under the states of *sattva* and *tamas* are conducive to attaining discriminative wisdom (*Kārikā* 23). This metaphysical framework is necessary to understand the difference between the two fundamental entities, which, according to Larson, contributes to the realization that is required within *Sāṅkhya* (Larson, 177). The notion of discrimination will be explained later on.

Sāṅkhyakārikā 11⁷⁹: Manifest *prakṛti* is *triguṇa* (constituted of the three *guṇas*), *aviveka* (non-distinguishable), *viśaya* (objective), *sāmānya* (common), *acetana* (unconscious/insentient), and *prasavadharmi* (prolific). *Pradhāna prakṛti* (primordial nature) is also similar. *Puruṣa* (consciousness) is the opposite of them but similar in some respects.

Vācaspati Miśra states that *vyakta prakṛti* (manifest material world) is composed of these three attributes which have pleasure⁸⁰, pain and delusion as their essences, respectively. The difference between unmanifest matter (*pradhāna*) and manifest matter is *aviveka* (non-distinguishable) because they have the same essence. Therefore, *buddhi*, the first evolute, essentially cannot be distinguished from *pradhāna*. The only difference is that *avyakta/pradhāna* (unmanifest) is unperceivable and *vyakta* (manifest) is perceivable (except for *buddhi*, *ahankāra* and *manas* which are inferred). *Vyakta* is also objective because it is apprehended by the senses and not based on one's idea (Vācaspati Miśra). In other words, there is an objective reality of the manifest that exists rather than a reality in one's mind.

Since the manifest is objective (existing externally), it is also *sāmānya* (common) because all *puruṣas* can apprehend it rather than only a few having the ability to perceive its presence. It is *acetana* (unconscious) because all matter including the *buddhi* is insentient, unlike *puruṣa* which is sentience itself. It is *prasavadharmi* (prolific) because matter continuously produces and evolves, while *puruṣa* does not do any of this. From the perspective of this paper, the strictly metaphysical explanations of the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*

⁷⁹ *triguṇamaviveki viśayaḥ sāmānyamacetanam prasavardharmi | vyaktam tathā pradhānam tadviparīṭastathā ca pumān ||SK, 11||*.

⁸⁰ The translator has equated the word *sattva* with pleasure; however, this may not be accurate if pleasure is associated with sense pleasure. Instead, one should view the word pleasure as contentment or happiness.

are important pieces of information. There is a lack of psychological attributes not only in the actual *kārikā* itself, but also in the commentator's explanations of the three *guṇas*. This provides a drastically distanced language.

Sāṅkhyakārikā 12⁸¹: The *guṇas* are of the nature of pleasure, pain and delusion. They serve the purpose of illumination, movement and restraint. They are mutually dominating and supporting, productive and cooperative.

The author describes their nature, purpose and operation.

Regarding their natures, Vācaspati Miśra explains that the term *prīti* (pleasure) is used for *sattva*, *aprīti* (pain) for the nature of *rajas* and *viṣāda* (delusion) for *tamas*. Their purposes are illumination, action and restraint, respectively (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 12). Notice how the natures of the attributes are somewhat linked to psychological states but are immediately and primarily explained metaphysically. The author does not elaborate on illumination but one can interpret it as clarity and sharpness of mind based on the sluggishness of *tamas* and the commentaries in *kārikā* 13. *Rajas* is associated with action and motion and thus interacts with immobile and buoyant *sattva* by stirring it to action. *Tamas*, however, is the restraint of action and dullness. It would seem that primarily *rajas* acts upon *sattva*⁸², unless *tamas* acts upon *rajas*. Thus, movement acts upon buoyancy, unless stopped by restraint, although this is not entirely so as the following operations will describe their reciprocal relationships.

Vācaspati Miśra explains that the *guṇas* are mutually dominating because when a particular *guṇa* is acting, it is predominating over the other two. For example, if *sattva* is

⁸¹ *Prītyaprītiviṣādātmacāḥ prakāśapravṛttinīyamārthāḥ | anyonyābhibhavāśrayajanānamithunavṛttayaśca guṇāḥ ||SK, 12||.*

⁸² *Rajas* can also act on *tamas*.

acting, it means that it has dominated over the other two. Thus, it is not only that *rajas* acts on *sattva* but also that *sattva* can overpower *rajas*. They are mutually supporting because when a *guṇa* predominates, it subserves the other two with its specific quality. For instance, if *sattva* predominates, it subserves the other two with illumination. If *rajas* predominates, it subserves the other two with activity. If *tamas* predominates, it subserves the other two with restraint⁸³. They are mutually productive because the *guṇas* modify each other. Vācaspati Miśra writes that a particular *guṇa* rests upon the other two while producing its effects. The effects consist of the same fundamental *guṇas*. Finally, they are mutually cooperative, meaning that they are never separated from one another. In other words, a single *guṇa* does not exist by itself.

Vācaspati Miśra offers a slightly more psychological twist by providing an example that the same object can be perceived in various ways depending on the perceiver's essential nature (predominating *guṇa*). For example, Vācaspati Miśra writes that a beautiful woman can be a source of delight to bystanders but can be the source of misery to the other wives of her husband and bewilderment to those who are addicted to beauty (*Kārikā* 13). In this way, the *guṇa* is related to an individual because a single object can produce varying effects in different types of people based on their natures. One's nature, based on the predominant *guṇa* may determine one's reaction. The process of *centralization* is very weak in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*'s exposition on the *guṇas* as it produces a more metaphysical feel.

⁸³ One can try to visualize a block (the predominating *guṇa*), resting on two blocks (submissive *guṇas*) and impacting the other two.

Sāṅkhyakārikā 13⁸⁴: The *sattva guṇa* is buoyant and illuminating; *rajas* attribute is exciting and mobile; and *tamas* is heavy and enveloping. They function for a single purpose, like that of a lamp.

This *kārikā* defines the three *guṇas* (qualities of material nature) that are in constant flux. The used term for buoyant is *laghu/lāghava*, that which causes the efficient functioning of all instruments. In such a case, the intellect, mind and senses function in a lucid state. Buoyant is used as lightness, leading to the springing up of things, causes the shooting upward of the flame of fire. What exactly is *sattva* illuminating? An individual under the state of *sattva* has clearly functioning senses and internal organs. Thus, this buoyancy is in contrast to the sluggishness of *tamas* which slows the functioning of internal organs. Similarly, this illumination is in contrast to the darkness of *tamas*, which naturally clouds the judgement of the internal organs. *Rajas* causes the immobile *sattva guṇa* and *tamas guṇa* to act and initiate their respective effects. It excites the other two *guṇas* into activity, otherwise, they would just rest on their own. *Tamas* once again is the restraining *guṇa* which leads to the mind's delusion, sluggishness and obscurity (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 13).

Vācaspati Miśra brings up an exception: If these *guṇas* have contradictory properties how is it that they do not destroy each other? The analogy of a lamp is provided, that wick and oil are opposed to the action of fire, but when all are brought together they cooperate and provide light. In the same way, the three *guṇas* coalesce and cooperate to free *puruṣa*. The mind: *buddhi*, *ahankāra*, and *manas* are manifestations of *prakṛti*, thus they are also composed of the three *guṇas*. Psychological qualities such as

⁸⁴ *Sattvaṃ laghuprakāśakamīṣṭamupaśtambhakam calaṃ ca rajah | guru varaṇakameva pradīpavaccārthataḥ vṛttiḥ ||SK, 13||.*

pleasure, pain and delusion are attributed to a metaphysics that was originally introduced as illumination, activity and restraint. Therefore, this introduces psychological states of mind intertwined with the metaphysics of the material world. By understanding the metaphysics, one forms a foundation to subsequently understand the psychology behind the *guṇas*.

Buddhi

Sāṅkhyakārikā 23: *Buddhi* is ascertainment or will. Under *sattva*, the *buddhi* has virtue, knowledge, dispassion and power. Under *tamas*, the *buddhi* has reverse of these (66).

Buddhi is *adhyavasāya* (ascertainment). Ascertain, used as a verb, is defined as the ability to identify true and correct information. In other words, a quality of the *buddhi* is the ability to know the truth about an object, person, place, etc. Vācaspati Miśra draws attention to the phrase “*buddhi* is ascertainment,” as a statement in apposition so that one knows that the function is the same as the functionary. Thus, the function of *buddhi* is the same to that which holds the function, perhaps stating that there is no difference between the metaphysical entity of *buddhi* and its distinct function of the ability of ascertainment. Thus, ascertainment is not a quality of *buddhi*, but *buddhi* itself. Moving on, Vācaspati Miśra states that *buddhi* is the determination that something has to be done, the power of determination (*adhyavasāyaḥ*). The *buddhi*⁸⁵ is synonymous with ascertainment and determination. The *buddhi* has four qualities affected by the two *guṇas*: *sattva* and *tamas*.

⁸⁵ In the *Sāṅkhyasūtra*, *buddhi* is also translated as intellect or great principle. (Vijñānabhikṣu, Book 2, *Sūtra* 13).

The *sāttvic buddhi* is: virtue⁸⁶ (*dharmāḥ*), knowledge⁸⁷/wisdom (*jñānam*), dispassion⁸⁸ (*vairāgaḥ*), lordliness/power⁸⁹ (*aiśvaryam*).

Vācaspati Miśra defines virtue as the cause for secular prosperity⁹⁰ (*abhyudaya*) and the highest good⁹¹ (*niḥśreyasa*), knowledge/wisdom⁹² as understanding the difference between *puruṣa*, *prakṛti* and its constituents⁹³, dispassion as the absence of passion⁹⁴, and lordliness/power as the perfections⁹⁵ (*siddhis*). Dispassion is described as a fourfold system, *yatamāna sañjñā* (restraint stage⁹⁶), *vyatireka sañjñā* (discriminative stage), *ekendriya sañjñā* (one-organ stage), and *vaśīkāra sañjñā* (control/subjugation stage).

Vācaspati Miśra explains that the *citta*⁹⁷ is full of passions and emotions which contribute to its impurity. These passions attract the sense organs towards their objects. In

⁸⁶ Humanity, benevolence, and acts of restraint (*yama*) and of obligation (*niyama*) (Gauḍapāda, *Kārikā* 23).

⁸⁷ External Knowledge: Knowledge of the *Vedas* and branches (recitation, ritual, grammar, glossary, prosody, astronomy), *purāṇas*, logic, theology, law. Internal knowledge: Difference between nature and soul, three *guṇas* (Gauḍapāda, *Kārikā* 23).

⁸⁸ External: Distance from sense objects. Internal: Focused on liberation and perceived nature to be like witchcraft or illusion (Gauḍapāda, *Kārikā* 23).

⁸⁹ Power of a superior or divine being (Gauḍapāda, *Kārikā* 23).

⁹⁰ Prosperity is tied to the notion of merit collected by performing sacrifices and charity, which could perhaps be referring to one's prosperity when forming "good" *karma*. Perhaps the link between a *sāttvic buddhi* and secular prosperity is that one possessing the former is likely to be inclined towards virtuous acts of charity which accrue "good *karma*." As of now, this is uncertain.

⁹¹ Vācaspati Miśra specifically mentions that the eight-fold *yoga* (*aṣṭāṅga yoga*) path leads to the highest good. Similarly, perhaps the link between a *sāttvika buddhi* and the highest good is that one who possesses the former is inclined towards practicing *aṣṭāṅga yoga*.

⁹² This is perhaps the most important quality of the *buddhi*, as it is directly related to the goal of *Sāṅkhya*: attaining discriminative wisdom within the *buddhi* for the release of *puruṣa* from *prakṛti*. The second quality of knowledge will be explained later in the paper, when the school's goal is more elaborately explained.

⁹³ Three *guṇas*.

⁹⁴ Vācaspati Miśra specifies that dispassion is the absence of passion for sensual enjoyments (67).

⁹⁵ The perfections include the ability to become atomic (*aṇimā*), levitation (*laghimā*), magnification (*mahimā*), ability to touch the farthest objects (*prāpti*), unrestricted fulfillment of desires (*prākāmya*), mastery of all elements and products; insubordinate to none (*vaśītvam*), sovereignty over the production, absorption and arrangement of elements (*īśītvam*), infallibility of will (*yatra kāmāvasāyītvam*).

⁹⁶ The word "stage" should be conceived of as a position of progress or a certain level of awareness the practitioner has reached.

⁹⁷ A term used for mind, possibly a combination of *buddhi*, *ahaṁkāra* and *manas*. Not commonly used in *Sāṅkhya* but used in *Yogasūtra*. Vācaspati Miśra calls it the retentive faculty, suggesting that it is an organ that holds something. In the context of *Sāṅkhya-Yoga*, it seems to be *saṁskāra*. *Saṁskāras* are mental impressions that exist within the *citta* which are equivalent to latent or dormant memories and impulses that impact an individual's conduct and condition of life.

the first stage, *yatamāna sañjñā* (restraint stage), an individual is required to prevent the senses from being attracted to the sense objects. To purify these passions, this stage involves the process of totally inhibiting any sense contact between the sense organs and objects of pleasure. Vācaspati Miśra does not provide an example but perhaps we can use the typical scenario of seeing a chocolate bar and refraining from eating it. If one is blocking the interaction between the senses and their objects, then this requires a willful avoidance of the latter. Thus, if one notices a strong passion for chocolate, one must avoid instances, places, ideas and conceptions of chocolate to the best of one's ability. This may involve eating in places that do not have chocolate, taking an alternate route home instead of passing an ice cream store and switching the channel when there are Cadbury commercials. In this way, when the senses cannot contact the sense objects, there can be no attraction.

In the second stage, *vyatireka sañjñā* (discriminative stage), Vācaspati Miśra explains that when the purification process begins, some passions are refined while others are still becoming purified. One is essentially ascertaining which passions are purified and which need to be purified (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 23). In this stage of dispassion one is discriminating between these two categories and forming a conscious awareness of one's passions. For example, after avoiding all instances of chocolate, one becomes aware of that particular desire's gradual refinement, but simultaneously notices one's strong desire for the opposite sex. Thus, one notices what one has conquered, almost conquered and what still needs to be conquered.

In the third stage, *ekendriya sañjñā* (one-organ stage), Vācaspati Miśra explains that the sense organs are no longer capable of activities and the purified emotions residing within the *citta* exist as mere craving (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 23). In other

words, the sense organs are not drawn towards the sense objects because there is no sense contact. Thus, the passions are weak and exist within the mind as a weak craving. This reveals that the word refinement or purification is a process rather than an immediate change. Until this stage, the individual is preventing the senses from contacting the sense objects and identifying his weak and strong passions. This leaves the third step as isolating the passions within the mind in a weak and starved form. Therefore, this is a gradual process rather than an on/off switch.

In the fourth stage, *vaśīkāra sañjñā* (control/subjugation stage), Vācaspati Miśra explains that the individual experiences a complete cessation of craving towards all sense objects even when the latter is in proximity (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 23). In other words, even after the senses contact the sense objects, one is no longer interested in pursuing the latter. A *sāttvika buddhi* entails having this type of dispassion. Overall, as the *buddhi* becomes more *sāttvika*, the passions (impurities) become refined and weakened. This process involves withdrawal from sense objects, discrimination between strong and weak passions, complete isolation of cravings, and elimination of cravings.

To describe the *buddhi* under a state of *tamas* the author states that it is the opposite of the four previously mentioned qualities: vice, ignorance, passion and servility. One can argue that since a *sāttvika buddhi* is inclined towards virtuous activity, a *tāmasika buddhi* would have a propensity towards vice or *adhārmika* actions.⁹⁸ Furthermore, if *sattva* entails discrimination, then *tamas* indicates non-discrimination which is a total and complete inability to understand the difference between *puruṣa* and

⁹⁸ This may perhaps refer to a path of attaining bad merit from sinful deeds or chasing material desires rather than pursuing a path of renunciation.

prakṛti (*avyakta*, *vyakta*).⁹⁹ The *Sāṅkhyasūtra* states that the *buddhi* becomes reversed through tincture (*Vijñānabhikṣu*, 198). When *rajas* and *tamas* act on *buddhi*, the nature of the latter changes, it becomes reversed. This implies that the *buddhi*'s natural course of progress is towards *sattva* or perhaps *buddhi* is in a natural state of *sattva*¹⁰⁰.

When the commentary on *buddhi* is compared to that of *Sāṅkhya*'s *guṇa* model, the *buddhi* is described by the commentators as having a slightly more *centralized* theme because it is explained as having inherent qualities of virtue, knowledge, dispassion and power. These inherent qualities are manifestations of an "individual's" successful cultivation of a *sāttvika buddhi*. How does a virtuous *buddhi* act? How does a *buddhi* with knowledge act? How does a *buddhi* with dispassion act? By attempting to answer these questions, the reader will naturally find a *centralized* answer because these inherent qualities are related more to the individual than the metaphysical intellect. In addition the term *yogin* is used to describe one who dictates his life (five elements of nature) by his own will. Others or non-*yogins* however, do not dictate their own lives because they are under the control of the five elements of nature. Assuming the practitioner is invested in the text, the use of the term "*yogin*" has the potential to invoke a practitioner's sense of self further. After exposure to this verse, if in daily life he feels that he has "control" over his life through will, he may feel a greater *SoA*. Overall, when reading Vācaspati Miśra's commentary on the *buddhi* in the *SK*, a practitioner is not limited to a metaphysical interpretation but is instead, exposed to a more psychological feeling.

⁹⁹ It is very interesting to note here that in the *SK*, discrimination indicates an understanding of knowing the difference between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*; however, in the *YS*, not only is this important but also one must understand his nature to be *puruṣa*, the seer. In the *SK*, there seems to be a metaphysical distinction but not an understanding of identity. Metaphysics is discussed, but never in relation to one's identity.

¹⁰⁰ A *rājasika buddhi* is not mentioned in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*.

A large portion of Vācaspati Miśra's commentary on the *buddhi* includes the four stages of dispassion. Vācaspati Miśra wrote his own commentary on the *Yogasūtra*, suggesting a common link of ideas with the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*. Vācaspati Miśra even uses the word *citta* to describe the mind, which is a term more closely related to the *Yogasūtra* and not mentioned even once in the *SK kārikās*. Why is this important? The *YS*¹⁰¹ was written earlier than Vācaspati Miśra's commentary on the *SK*¹⁰². Thus, if Vācaspati Miśra took these four stages of dispassion from the *YS* commentary, if we were to exclude them from the *SK*, his commentary would have a drastically more metaphysical interpretation of *buddhi* in that very text. As previously mentioned, an impersonal approach in defining constituents of the mind can provide a more detached reading and less room for an *SoA* for the practitioner. Although there are psychological qualities mentioned as residing in the *buddhi*, the lack of *centralization* can make it difficult for an aspirant to feel like an agent.

Ahaṅkāra

Sāṅkhyakārikā 24: *Ahaṅkāra* (I'ness) is conceit/self-absorption. From that (*ahaṅkāra*) proceeds a two-fold evolution: the set of eleven and the five *tanmātras* (elements).

Vācaspati Miśra explains that *ahaṅkāra* is ego-centricity¹⁰³. He provides several statements to demonstrate this form of egocentricity: "I am entitled to this." "Verily, I am competent to do this." "All these objects of sense are for my sake only." "There is no one else other than me who is entitled for this, Hence I am." If *buddhi* is will, *ahaṅkāra* is ego-centricity, and the latter emerges from the former, then it seems that *ahaṅkāra* is a

¹⁰¹ 4th-5th century C.E. (Bryant, 2006).

¹⁰² 9th century C.E. (Larson, 149).

¹⁰³ In the *Sāṅkhyasūtra*, it is also translated as conceit, which functions to bring out the ego (Vijñānabhikṣu, Book 1, *Sūtra* 72).

form of a “*centralized* will.” The individual is not only willing to act in a *sāttvika* or *tāmasika* manner, but he now believes that he is the actor. In other words, the act itself is attributed to a concept of self. Metaphysically, it may help to imagine the *buddhi* as a force of generalized will, and the *ahankāra* as a magnetic force, pulling the will into a *centralized* self. For instance, imagine a hot air balloon (*buddhi*) expanding/floating upwards and a person (*ahankāra*) is pulling it down by the ropes. The verbal form of this phenomenon can be demonstrated as such:

“**Will**” → (*Ahankāra*) → I “**will.**”

“**Ascertain**” → (*Ahankāra*) → I “**ascertain.**”

Furthermore, Larson states that “...the *buddhi* is individual but not personal. It is outside of self-awareness” (183). The *buddhi* is independent of the *ahankāra*. Perhaps, it is the *ahankāra* that is pulling the *buddhi* into individuality, when in its original form, is generalized. The *Sāṅkhyasūtra* states that *ahankāra* brings out the ego (self-centeredness) in every case of cognition, “...the matter of which cognition would, else, have lain dormant in the bosom of Nature, the formless Objective” (Vijñānabhikṣu, Book 1, *Sūtra* 72). This statement reveals that cognition is occurring somewhere within *prakṛti*, but *ahankāra* is that force which brings that cognition to a central agent. Perhaps this *sūtra* agrees with the notion that *buddhi* is general until it is pulled in by *ahankāra*.

This *kārikā* on *ahankāra* is perhaps one of the only *kārikās* where the commentator Vācaspati Miśra explicitly relates a metaphysical concept to the individual. The word *abhimāna* is used to describe *ahankāra*. *Abhimāna* is defined as a “self-conceit, conception of one’s self, pride¹⁰⁴.” *Ahankāra* is defined as “the conception of one’s

¹⁰⁴ Monier Williams Sanskrit Dictionary (Online).

individuality, self consciousness¹⁰⁵.” These definitions clearly indicate that the ego is related to the self¹⁰⁶. Thus, this verse does not seem to have the problem of *centralization*. From the practitioner’s point of view, reading this verse on *ahankāra* allows for a more *personalized* experience. Although, the definition, without a clear explanation on how self-ego manifests (e.g. pride) can still retain a metaphysical form.

Manas

Sāṅkhyakārikā 27: Of these (sense organs), the *manas* (sub-mind¹⁰⁷) has the nature of both (the sensory and motor organs). It is the deliberating/reflecting principle and is multifariousness because of its changing *guṇas* and its external diversities.

Vācaspati Miśra states that cognition and action are not possible without the *manas* coming into contact with the sense organs. This occurs after the sense organs come into contact with sense objects¹⁰⁸.

- 1) Sense organs perceive sense objects
- 2) *Manas* comes into contact with the sense organ

As mentioned previously, the sense organs are either categorized into organs of knowledge or organs of action. The *manas* is a special organ because it is both an organ of knowledge and organ of action. The *manas* functions as a deliberating principle. Since deliberation involves thinking carefully and thoroughly before making a decision, the notion of doubt comes into question. This deliberation is different from the *buddhi*’s

¹⁰⁵ Monier Williams also defined as egotism, making of the self, thinking of the self.

¹⁰⁶ Not to be confused with soul, *puruṣa* and *ātman*

¹⁰⁷ In this paper, the word mind is used in three ways. First, mind is a general term referring to the notion of mind itself. Second, mind or *manas* is the third evolute of prakṛti in Sāṅkhya philosophy. Third, mind or *citta* is the general term for the concept of mind used in Yoga philosophy. Sometimes, however, the *citta* can indicate a combination of the *buddhi*, *ahankāra* and *manas*.

¹⁰⁸ Subsequently, the *manas* comes into contact with either *ahankāra* or *buddhi*, depending on the commentator.

function of ascertainment, because the former is a rational process of understanding, while the latter is knowledge of an object. Vācaspati Miśra provides an example stating that when the senses contact the sense objects, at times a doubt will occur as to what the object is. For example, one may ask “Is that my friend or a stranger?” The mind will continue to deliberate until certainty arises. One can infer that certainty must come from the *buddhi*, because *buddhi* is ascertainment.

A *Sāṅkhyasūtra* commentary states that the mind is both an organ of intellect and action just as a single man can be a variety of characters (Vijñānabhikṣu, 206). With his beloved, he can be a lover, with someone indifferent, he becomes indifferent and with someone else, he is someone else. A more applicable example is a woman who can be a mother, daughter and wife. In such a way, when mind is associated with the organ of vision, it is related to seeing. When associated with the organ of sound, it becomes associated with hearing. The commentator is saying that whatever organ (action, or intellect) with what the mind is associated with, the latter seems to take on that same (action, intellect) characteristic.

One can clearly see that the *manas* is entirely described as a metaphysical material entity. Once again, it is described as a sensory and motor organ with the ability of deliberation. The only manner in which it is *centralized* is when Vācaspati Miśra describes the initial unknown apprehension in the mind such as an idea that arises in the mind of a boy (Vācaspati Miśra, Kārikā 27). At first, the boy is unaware of what exactly is in front of him. Then the mind goes on to determine what this unknown idea is by comparing it to a certain genus, which then later identifies what the idea is. However, most commonly the example of the mind’s identification process is seeing an unknown distant object, followed by the mind’s inquiry or deliberation of the identity of that

distant object. The commentator *centers* the *manas* to an individual by describing it as a sense organ that deliberates from a boy's point of view. This form of *personalization* is more prevalent in the *Yogasūtra*.

Discriminative Wisdom in the *Buddhi*

In *Sāṅkhya* philosophy, the goal is for *puruṣa* to break free from the grasp of *prakṛti*. This result occurs by the attainment of discriminative wisdom (*viññāna*) within the *buddhi*. This is the metaphysical goal in *Sāṅkhya*. The personal¹⁰⁹ goal of *Sāṅkhya* is practically the same, however, it is viewed from the individual's eyes. The goal involves an end to the mind's suffering, which is also attained by discriminative wisdom within the *buddhi*. Although there are two ways to see the same goal, the *Kārikā* begins with the personal goal.

- I. *Puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are bound.
- II. This binding occurs because the *buddhi* does not have proper discrimination.
- III. When discrimination is attained, *prakṛti* releases *puruṣa* (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 66).
- IV. Plot Twist: *Puruṣa* was never bound, it is *prakṛti* that binds and frees itself¹¹⁰ (*Kārikā* 62). One still needs to discriminate, and since discrimination exists within the *buddhi*, one can conclude that this false perception (non-discrimination) occurs within the intellect.

Sāṅkhyakārikā 1¹¹¹: From the torment/injury caused by the three kinds of pain, there emerges a desire to know the means of removing them. If (it is said) the inquiry is

¹⁰⁹ A practitioner, an individual ego.

¹¹⁰ This will not be explained as of now but is a large component of this school's philosophy.

¹¹¹ *Duḥkhatrayābhigāhātājijñāsā tadapaghātake hetau | dṛṣṭe sāpārthā cet naikāntātyantato 'bhāvāt ||SK, 1||.*

pointless since visible means exist (we reply), no, because (in visible means) there is the absence of certainty and permanency (of pain).

In this *Kārikā*, the problem is clearly defined. Only from understanding pain resulting from the three-fold types, *ādhyāmika*¹¹², *ādhibautika*¹¹³ and *ādhidaivika*¹¹⁴, does one begin a search for the removal of it.¹¹⁵ The first step of the journey into *Sāṅkhya* philosophy begins with one's acknowledgement of pain in the material world followed by the desire to remove it completely. After this step, this *Kārikā* states that relieving this form of pain cannot be accomplished through visible means such as *Vedic* rituals, wealth, women, and pleasure, because their results are temporary and uncertain (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 1). For example, after realizing one feels dissatisfied or agitated and subsequently engages in sexual activity, one still finds oneself in a state of craving or suffering. Another example can be of a CEO who earns a six figure salary but still finds himself suffering from a disease or general dissatisfaction. Although a symptom of suffering has been relieved, suffering as a whole is not. It seems that this text is arguing that one form of suffering will only be replaced by another. Thus, rather than short lived alleviation, one needs a permanent solution stated in the next verse.

Besides the *kārikā* on the *ahankāra*, the first and second *kārikās* are some of the subtlest *personalized* verses in this particular text, without using the terms “one,” “individua”, etc. In order to speak of the three types of pain, the commentator must

¹¹² Intra-Organic: body-disorder of wind, bile and phlegm; mind-lust, anger, greed infatuation, fear, envy, grief and non-perception of objects (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 1).

¹¹³ External influences: man, beasts, birds, reptiles, plants and inanimate things (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 1).

¹¹⁴ Supernatural agencies: demi-gods, goblins, evil spirits, superhuman beings, planets (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 1)

¹¹⁵ Although there are three types of pain, I would argue that these pains all commonly existing within the mind, because regardless of where they come from, the mind feels frustration from it. Although they originate from different places, the mind is still suffering from them at some point.

relate them to the individual. In particular, speaking of the mental forms of suffering and the temporary remedies like charming women, drinks and food, clearly demonstrates a more *centralized* approach to the goal of *Sāṅkhya*. Furthermore, in the following verse, mention of *Vedic* sacrifice as temporary means also indicates one's futile attempt at ending one's suffering. It is important to note that although the *kārikā* itself seems like it is *centralizing*, it is the commentary that has a more personal feel.

Sāṅkhyakārikā 2¹¹⁶: That which is seen and heard (scripture) are the obvious means that are linked with impurity, decay and excess. The superior method is the means contrary/opposite to both (which is) from *vijñāna* (discriminative knowledge) of the *vyakta prakṛti* (manifest), the *avyakta prakṛti* (unmanifest) and the *puruṣa* (pure consciousness).

According to the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, the only effective termination of pain is through discriminative knowledge. One must cultivate discrimination within the *buddhi*, which as previously mentioned is a quality of the *sāttvika buddhi*. Thus, the quality of wisdom/knowledge listed under the *buddhi* is the very goal in *Sāṅkhya* philosophy. Discriminative knowledge is defined as knowledge of the manifest (*vyakta prakṛti*), unmanifest (*avyakta prakṛti*) and spirit (*puruṣa*). Vācaspati Miśra states that one must first attain knowledge of the manifest (*vyakta*), then the unmanifest (*avyakta*) and that the latter is the cause of the manifest (9). From knowing that manifest and unmanifest (*prakṛti*) must exist for another¹¹⁷ (*puruṣa*), the knowledge of *puruṣa* is gained. Knowledge of the distinction itself is gained from understanding the manifest, which is:

“...from the Sruti (Vedas), Smṛti (Canonical texts), Itihāsa (historical accounts) and Purāṇas (mythology); then by duly having established the same through scientific reasoning, and finally by

¹¹⁶ *Dṛṣṭavadānuśravikaḥ sa hyaviśuddhikṣayātīśayayuktaḥ | tadviparītaḥ śreyān vyaktāvyaktañāvijñānāt ||SK, 2||.*

¹¹⁷ This inference is not clearly explained.

absorbing that knowledge into oneself by earnest and uninterrupted contemplation¹¹⁸ for a long time” (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 2).

The process of attaining discriminative wisdom is clearly delineated by Vācaspati Miśra. By the means mentioned above, one must first attain knowledge of *prakṛti*. This seems to be counterintuitive, one can argue that the purpose of religious textual sources is for the understanding of God or a higher consciousness apart from matter, but in *Sāṅkhya*, according to Vācaspati Miśra, it seems that the direct goal is to understand material nature. If these means satisfy the *buddhi*’s understanding of manifest and unmanifest *prakṛti*, one must finally understand that *prakṛti* exists for another, *puruṣa*. Thus, discriminative wisdom has been cultivated. If this is the case, one must have a totally *sāttvika buddhi*.

Discrimination, being a quality of the *buddhi*, indicates that one does not need to seek discrimination outside of oneself, because it already exists within. If discrimination is already a part of the *buddhi* and individuals are unable to cultivate it, then there must be something keeping the *buddhi* from acting with discrimination. The most logical answer here would be the *guṇa* of *tamas*¹¹⁹, as stated in a previous verse. If the *buddhi* has such an important task and is covered by the quality of *tamas*, then the only solution would be to make the *buddhi* more *sāttvika*. The next step is to inquire into the process of making the *buddhi* *sāttvika* when it is not. There are many options within the *Sāṅkhyasūtra* as well as the *Bhagavadgītā* which explain how to reduce *rajas/tamas* and increase *sattva*. To reiterate, the goal of *Sāṅkhya* is to cultivate discrimination within the

¹¹⁸ This refers to meditation.

¹¹⁹ This quality is heavy or sluggish, but also, the *buddhi* under *tamas* is the opposite of being in *sattva*, which means it lacks discrimination.

buddhi, which is its natural state under the *guṇa* of *sattva* while its natural state under *tamas* being ‘non-discrimination’.¹²⁰

The metaphysical goal of this school is the release of *puruṣa* from *prakṛti*. The same goal viewed from a personal lens, is for an individual to end his/her suffering. His suffering occurs because of that very bond between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. The individual who is under this bond has non-discrimination. Larson states that the world is understood by the individual by how *puruṣa* witnesses it when it is in conjunction with *prakṛti*.

Therefore:

“...this explains why the principles (*tattvas*) in the *Kārikā* are expressed usually in terms of a psychological rather than cosmological categories...In the *Kārikā*, however, the basic *tattvas* or principles are analyzed mainly from the point of view of the individual. Little attention is given to cosmological implications, and one can only conclude that such concerns were secondary in the mind of the author” (Larson, 178).

When referring to *Sāṅkhya*, the author also creates two categories: psychological and cosmological. Thus, it is safe to say that one can view the soteriological goal of *Sāṅkhya* from a personal or metaphysical lens, respectively. From a psychological lens, the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* has only a few verses that are rooted in the lens of the individual. So, for the most part, I will have to disagree with Larson when he says the *tattvas* are expressed in a more psychological manner. It is clear from the majority of verses that the view is from a more metaphysical lens, certainly in comparison to the *Yogasūtra*. Once again, this *kārikā* *personalizes* without the use of the terms “one” and “his” but through the natural relation to the individual¹²¹.

¹²⁰ The inability to discriminate between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*.

¹²¹ Examples like *Vedic* sacrifices, expiatory rites and animal sacrifices are provided. Even if the sentence was: ‘*Vedic* sacrifices were performed,’ it would still be difficult to separate this from the individual. This is why the *kārikā* still manages to *center* even without the use of certain words.

Sāṅkhyakārikā 20¹²³: Therefore, through this union, insentient matter appears as if it is sentient. In the agency (belonging to) the *guṇas*, the neutral *puruṣa* appears as if it were an agent (62-63).

The *Sāṅkhyakārikā* states that *puruṣa* does not have the function of agency and that it is instead, is a function of the *guṇas*, which are the constituents of *prakṛti*. Thus, agency must exist somewhere within *prakṛti*. The *Sāṅkhyakārikā* states that the *buddhi* is translated as determination, the will to do something. Thus, it seems that agency is located in the *buddhi* according to the *Kārikā*, in Vācaspati Miśra's commentary. Furthermore, the *Sāṅkhyasūtra* states that the *ahaṅkāra* (I'ness) is the agent, not the *puruṣa*¹²⁴ (Vijñānabhikṣu, 450). Even though the *Sāṅkhyasūtra* mentions *buddhi* to be the highest and final organ, it still considers the *ahaṅkāra* (ego) to be the source of agency. The *Sāṅkhyakārikā* takes a slightly different view: the soul is seen as an agent only through the influence and proximity of the *buddhi*. In other words, *puruṣa* is seen as an agent because *buddhi* is near it. If the soul has no such quality, and the quality of agency is occurring due to this reason, then agency must be a part of *buddhi*.

In order to understand the meaning of agency in relation to *puruṣa*, Bryant points out a highly important axiom in the *Sāṅkhya* school of thought: If something is eternal, then that thing cannot change (19). In order for an entity to be eternal, it must retain its identity or essence or be constantly changing. A manipulation of that very entity suggests the production of a new entity with a different identity, qualifying the former as non-

¹²² The purpose of this section is to locate 'agency' in the *Sāṅkhya* school of thought. This topic may appear to be a digression but is in fact helpful in locating the seat of doership.

¹²³ *Tasmāttatsaṃyogādacetanaṃ cetanāvadiva liṅgam | guṇakartṛtve'pi tathā karteḥ bhavatyudāsīnaḥ ||SK, 20||.*

¹²⁴ *Ahaṅkāraḥ kartā na puruṣaḥ ||54||* (Vijñānabhikṣu, Book 6).

eternal. Thus, the *puruṣa* is seen to be eternal because it does not undergo change, movement or manipulation. It is important to understand agency because the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* uses the word *akartṛbhāvaḥ*, non-agent, to describe the lack of agency in the *puruṣa* (*Kārikā* 19). Bryant writes that “To be an agent, of course can only transpire in a context of changeability and responsiveness: ‘agency’ presupposes the potential to make choice and change one’s choice if one so determines) some form of investment in choice, and determinative and desirable choice between options” (Bryant, 20). Therefore, since agency requires a change in choice, it cannot exist within *puruṣa*. It must exist with *prakṛti*.

The Internal Instruments: Order of Operation

Vācaspati Miśra states that first a sense object is perceived and the message then travels to the *manas* upon where it is reflected. Then the message goes to the *ahankāra* which leads to the thought, “I experienced this.” Finally, the sense perception is presented to the *buddhi* which subsequently makes a decision, but also reflects the sense perception back to the soul, which simply witnesses it (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 36).

Sāṅkhyakārikā 36¹²⁵: These organs are different from one another and have different qualities because of distinction in *guṇas* (material nature), are similar to a lamp. They offer illumination of all (objects) and present them to the *buddhi* for the purpose of *puruṣa*.

Vācaspati Miśra provides an analogy of a village chief officer who collects taxes from the heads of different families and presents them to the head of the district. The head of the village gives the taxes to the head of all the districts who finally gives it to the

¹²⁵ *Ete pradīpakalpāḥ parasparavilakṣaṇā guṇaviśeṣāḥ | kṛtsnam puruṣasyārtham prakāśya budhau prayacchati* ||SK, 36||.

king. In the same way, the external organs with their perceived objects, present sensory information to the *manas* which gives it to the *ahaṅkāra*, and finally gives it to the *buddhi*. The *manas* observes the sense impressions and ruminates and the *ahaṅkāra* takes personal cognizance by adding an “I.” Overall, according to Vācaspati Miśra, everything is presented to the *buddhi*.

In his commentary on *Kārikā* 36, Vācaspati Miśra introduces the question: Why do all the sense organs present the sense perception/cognition to *buddhi* rather than *ahaṅkāra*, as the last organ. The next verse should demonstrate why.

Sāṅkhyakārikā 37¹²⁶: From which it is *buddhi* that attains all for the pleasure of *puruṣa*, and again, indeed, discriminates the subtle difference between *puruṣa* and *pradhāna*.

Vācaspati Miśra explains that the main objective of the organs is to serve *puruṣa*, in other words, for *puruṣa* to be free. The only way for *puruṣa* to be free is for *buddhi* to discriminate the difference between the two entities. Thus, the *buddhi* is the most important organ because it accomplishes the purpose directly, while the other organs do not. *Buddhi* has the potential to accomplish *SK*’s main goal of releasing *puruṣa*. With this argument, Vācaspati Miśra makes sense when trying to explain the importance of the *buddhi* over the *ahaṅkāra*. He accomplishes this by explaining that this very organ performs the most significant function of all, discrimination. If so, then it must be the most important and dominant organ of which other organs are subordinate. *Ahaṅkāra* is the I’ness, and produces a sense of individuality. Although its function is important, and indirectly serves the purpose of discrimination, it does not directly do as the *buddhi* does. And so,

¹²⁶ *Sarvaṃ pratyupabhogam yasmātpuruṣasya sādhyati buddhi | saiva ca viśināṣti punaḥ pradhānupuruṣāntaram sūkṣmam ||SK, 37||.*

“...among the organs, the *Buddhi* alone does this directly; hence, that alone is considered to be the Principal organ, just like the government being considered superior to all other chiefs by virtue of his being the direct agent of the king, while others such as the village head etc, are only of the secondary importance when compared to the former” (Vācaspati Miśra, *Kārikā* 37).

It is clear that the *ahankāra* centralizes the *buddhi* and *manas* to an individual. In the same way, the commentators are occasionally *centralizing* the metaphysical entities to the individual when trying to explain the functions. Essentially, we are speaking of the same phenomenon when trying to understand the mind in *Sāṅkhya*. Are the commentators providing a *centralized* (*ahankāra*-like) experience when describing the mind? On the contrary, are the commentators providing a more impersonal description of the mind and goal of this particular school of philosophy? Although there are analogies that refer to individuals, there still seems to be a metaphysical feel when talking about the interaction between the three internal organs.

Sāṅkhyakārikā 51¹²⁷: Reasoning, oral instruction, study, the three-fold suppression of pain, acquisition of well-wishers, and purity (or charity) are the eight forms of success. The three mentioned before are the three restrainers of *siddhi* (or success).

This is one of the only *kārikās* in the *SK* that provides a suggested course of action in the verse itself that is independent of the commentators’ explanation. Vācaspati Miśra writes that to suppress pain, one must perform *adhyayanam*¹²⁸, *ūhaḥ*¹²⁹, *suhṛtprāptiḥ*¹³⁰, *dānam*¹³¹ etc. Clearly, this *kārikā* centralizes because it prioritizes a psychological path over metaphysics. A proposed path consisting of actions provides the practitioner with the ability to believe in and witness results. When the practitioner starts to gain an understanding of the scriptures, more like-minded company, etc., he also gains

¹²⁷ *Ūhaḥ śabdo ’dhyayanam duḥkhaviḥghātāśrayaḥ suhṛtprāptiḥ | dānam ca siddhayaḥ ’ṣṭau siddheḥ pūrvō ’nkuśaḥ trividhaḥ ||SK, 51||*

¹²⁸ Learning while living with teacher in hopes of understanding scriptures and the self.

¹²⁹ Reasoning or argumentation.

¹³⁰ Acquiring friends, fellow students.

¹³¹ Charity, purity.

more knowledge. Subsequently, he can begin to see the effects of his actions. By seeing the effects of his actions, he can feel more like an agent.

The Internal Instruments: Function in Time

Sāṅkhyakārikā 33¹³²: The inner-instrument is three in number. The outer instruments are ten in number and are the object of the three. The outer instruments work in present time while the inner instrument works in three times (past, present and future).

The ten external organs only function in the present moment. For instance, sight is perceived by the eye, sound by the ear, smell by nose, texture by touch, taste by tongue only in the present moment. The three internal instruments, *buddhi*, *ahankāra* and *manas* function in the past, present and future. For instance, a person can use the mind to think of the past or even imagine a future circumstance. Three interesting examples in the form of inferential statements are given by Vācaspati Miśra to explain this example (*Kārikā 33*).

- a) **Past**: It had rained because the river has become full with water
- b) **Present**: There is fire in the mountain because there is smoke
- c) **Future**: It would rain provided no obstacles are there, because, we see ants carrying eggs.

This simply explains the limitations of the external organs compared to the internal organs. The commentators are *centralizing* very minimally.

¹³² *Antaḥkaraṇaṃ trividhaṃ daśadhā bāhyaṃ trayasya viśayākhyam | sāmpratākālaṃ bāhyaṃ trikālamābhyantaraṃ karaṇam ||SK, 33||*

Sāṅkhyakārikā 30¹³³: Of the set of four (senses, *manas*, *ahankāra* and *buddhi*) the functions are simultaneous and successive in reference to seen objects. In reference to unseen objects, it is the previous function of the three (*buddhi*, *ahankāra* and *manas*).

To explain simultaneity, Vācaspati Miśra uses an example of an individual who is surrounded by darkness. After the individual sees light from lightening and perceives a tiger, four steps take place. The eye's perception of the tiger, the mind's consideration (*manas*), identification with the self (*ahankāra*), and determination (*buddhi*) occur all at once (*Kārikā*, 30). Thus, what seems to be a process that may seem separated by time is not and instead occurs instantaneously.

Next, Vācaspati Miśra explains what he means by the word successively. He states that, when a man sees something vaguely in a dim light, he applies his mind to figure out what it is. Then when the mind notices that it is a cruel robber with a bow aimed at him, the *ahankāra* makes him aware that this threat is occurring at him (I'ness), then the *buddhi* determines that the man should escape immediately. But what about things that are unseen that do not require sense perception? Vācaspati Miśra states that the internal organs function on their own, without sense perception. He does not provide an example here, but we can perhaps imagine a situation where a student has to present for a speech the next day. In the moment, he is not perceiving the presentation or a podium, but is using the *manas*, *ahankāra* and *buddhi* to imagine the event, leading to his anxiety. The *manas* can imagine a situation and the situation then causes him to relate it to himself by seeing the threat happening to him. Then the *buddhi* states that either he

¹³³ *Yugapaccatuṣṭyasya tu vṛttiḥ kramaśca tasya nirḍiṣṭā | dṛṣṭe tathāpyadrṣṭe trayasya tatpūrvikā vṛttiḥ ||SK, 30||.*

needs to prepare more or avoid it. However, this knowledge could only have occurred if it had been perceived or experienced before (*Vācaspati Miśra*, 76).

This is a clear example of *centralizing* the speed and order of interactions between the internal organs. The reader can understand the succession of the internal organs with reference to a tiger and a post. The commentators even use the language “when one sees...a tiger facing him...” and this is immediately linked to the *ahaṅkāra*. This type of language helps for a personal experience. In a *decentralized* experience, the commentator could have written, when the organ of sight perceives a tiger, the information is passed to the mind which then considers, followed by the ego adding an “I”. The language and examples help the practitioner by relating it to oneself through visualization.

Chapter Four¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Trivedī, Hemal P. *Sense of Agency: The Mind in Sāṃkhya & Yoga*. Rutgers University, 2017.

The *Sense of Agency* in the *Yogasūtra*

Due to the predominance of psychology and practice based *sūtras*, the *Yogasūtra* may provide to the practitioner more of a psychological “feel.” This will allow the reader to imagine the world of the practitioner, or *yogin*, who strives for the end goal (*samādhi*). The reader should pay close attention to the highly *centralized sūtras* located in this text in comparison with most *kārikās* of the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*.

Yogasūtra 1.2¹³⁵: *Yoga* is the suppression/cessation of the fluctuations of the mind.

Where in the *SK* the goal is to cultivate discrimination within the *buddhi*, in the *YS*, the goal is to still/suppress the mind from having any modifications¹³⁶ (*vr̥ttis*). In order to accomplish this, the mind must be in a state devoid of thoughts. When this occurs, the *puruṣa* (observer)¹³⁷ abides in its own nature (Patañjali, 1.3). When all *vr̥ttis* are stilled, the *puruṣa*, pure consciousness, abides within itself and is no longer being taken in or absorbed by the *vr̥ttis* of the mind. If the *puruṣa* is not abiding in its own nature, then it is totally absorbed in the *vr̥ttis* (1.4). A more appropriate word than absorption is identification. When the *puruṣa* is conscious of the *vr̥ttis*, instead of itself, it is identified with the *vr̥ttis*. The *sūtra* states that the observer appears to assume the form of the *vr̥ttis*.

It would seem that Vyāsa is saying that one believes one's true nature to be the very thoughts one has and thus experiences this erroneous conception. This occurs because the mind, specifically *buddhi* is in proximity to the *puruṣa* and so its modifications are taken to be *puruṣa* itself. Therefore, it is important to understand that either the *puruṣa* is conscious of itself or *puruṣa* is conscious of the *vr̥ttis*, which indicates that the *citta* (mind) confuses *puruṣa* for the *vr̥ttis*. Thus, there are only two optional states for *puruṣa* to experience.

In the beginning *sūtras*, there is little *centralization* occurring. The *sūtras* along with the commentaries are speaking of the relationship between consciousness and *citta* in a slightly impersonal manner much like that of the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*. In the first few

¹³⁵ *Yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ ||YS, 1.2||*.

¹³⁶ The Sanskrit word for modification is *vr̥tti*.

¹³⁷ Pure consciousness or *puruṣa*.

sūtras, when intricately discussing the *citta* under the influence of the three *guṇas*, Vyāsa mentions the term *yogin*, practitioner of *yoga*, twice. This word is mentioned in reference to the states and byproducts of mind that are achieved when stilled. Overall, there is a moderate amount of *centralization* in the first verses of this text because even if the particular language is excluded, metaphysical concepts are still *centered* around an individual.

Vṛttis, for the most part, are obstacles to the path of *yoga* (stilling the mind). There are *kliṣṭa*¹³⁸ (detrimental) and *akliṣṭa*¹³⁹ (non-detrimental) *vṛttis* (Patañjali, Sūtra 1.5). The five types of *vṛttis* are *pramāṇa*¹⁴⁰ (right knowledge), *viparyaya*¹⁴¹ (error), *vikalpa*¹⁴² (imagination), *nidrā*¹⁴³ (deep sleep) and *smṛti* (memory)¹⁴⁴

It is the *vṛttis* that need to be stilled in order to achieve the goal of *samādhi* (*yoga*). Thus, one must know the differences between the categories of afflictive and non-afflictive *vṛttis*. *Kliṣṭa* or afflictive *vṛttis* come from the *kleśas*¹⁴⁵, which are mutations of the *guṇas* and serve as impediments to *yoga*. These *vṛttis* distance one from the goal of *samādhi*. *Akliṣṭa* or non-afflictive *vṛttis* do not emerge from the *kleśas* and are conducive to attaining discriminative knowledge¹⁴⁶. Hariharānanda writes that these *vṛttis* of *viveka*¹⁴⁷ stop the functions of the *citta* by counteracting the *vṛttis* of the three *guṇas*. Thus, although the goal is to still the mind, the non-afflictive *vṛttis* are beneficial in

¹³⁸ Detrimental/afflictive to the path of *yoga*. For example, “I am the body and the mind.”

¹³⁹ Beneficial/non-afflictive to the path of *yoga* “I should meditate today.”

¹⁴⁰ Perception, Inference and Testimony (Patañjali, 1.7).

¹⁴¹ False knowledge/illusion formed of something other than what it is (Patañjali, 1.8).

¹⁴² Verbal cognition of a thing that does not exist (Patañjali, 1.9).

¹⁴³ Dreamless sleep produced by inertia (*tamas*) in a state of vacuity or negation (Patañjali, 1.10).

¹⁴⁴ Recollection caused by reproduction of the previous impression of an object without adding anything from other sources (Patañjali, 1.11).

¹⁴⁵ These impediments will be explained more thoroughly in a later chapter.

¹⁴⁶ In the *YS*, the term for discriminate knowledge is *viveka* (*YS*, 2.26). In the *SK*, it is *vijñāna* (*SK*, 2).

¹⁴⁷ *Viveka* is discrimination. “*Viveka* is only the distinction between the seer and the seen” (Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, 2.26).

reaching the goal. He writes “...non-afflictive modifications show up when spiritual practice and detachment effect a breach in the flow of afflictive mental modifications” (Hariharānanda, 1.5). When an individual is having consistent thoughts that are not conducive to the goal of *yoga*, non-afflictive *vr̥ttis* start to break these thoughts when one has included spiritual practice and detachment in one’s life. Similarly, the commentator writes that the same can occur as afflictive *vr̥ttis* break the flow of non-afflictive *vr̥ttis*. One can infer that this occurs when an individual is moving away from spiritual practice and detachment.

If afflictive *vr̥ttis* come from the *kleśas*, then from where do the non-afflictive *vr̥ttis* come? Hariharānanda writes that “Saṃskāras are in turn causative factors of other modifications like right cognition (Pramāṇa) etc” (1.5). A cycle is established: *vr̥ttis* lead to *saṃskāras*, and *saṃskāras* produce new *vr̥ttis*. This cyclic relationship is occurring in the *citta*, and by cultivating non-afflictive *vr̥ttis* one gradually reach the goal of *yoga* (stilling the mind). Based on this cyclic model, if one cultivates non-afflictive *vr̥ttis*, then in turn, one cultivates *saṃskāras* that will produce further non-afflictive *vr̥ttis*. However, this solution can only work if non-afflictive *vr̥ttis* are associated with non-afflictive *saṃskāras* and afflictive *vr̥ttis* are associated with afflictive *saṃskāras*¹⁴⁸.

In the opening *sūtras* explaining *vr̥ttis*, there are no instances of *centralization* besides when the terms spiritual practice and detachment are used to describe the process used to break the pattern of afflictive *vr̥ttis*. Therefore, a similar distant language that was used in the *SK* is also being used in the *YS*, however, there is a direct emphasis on the

¹⁴⁸ The next question to ask is, if afflictive *vr̥ttis* are derived from the *kleśas* and non-afflictive *vr̥ttis* are derived from *saṃskāras*, what is the relationship between the two causes? In other words, what is the relationship between the *kleśas* and *saṃskāra*? As we define the *kleśas*, this relationship will become clearer.

psychological modifications of the mind (knowledge, error, sleep, etc.) from the beginning. What types of thoughts are individual's having that act as distractions to the goal? Answering this question by nature is *centering*. This emphasis may naturally evoke a more personal feeling within the reader. Also, there are several verses that explain each *vr̥tti* in depth. Within these verses, there is great potential for more verses demonstrating *centralization*. For instance, for the sleep *vr̥ttis* Vyāsa writes:

“Since we can remember when we wake up that we had been sleeping, sleep is called a mental modification, as indicated in the feelings expressed by phrases such as ‘I slept well, I am feeling cheerful, it has cleared my brain’ or ‘I slept poorly; on account of disturbed sleep, my mind has become restless, and is wandering unsteadily,’ or I was in deep sleep as if in a stupor, my limbs are heavy, my brain is tired and languid, as if it has been stolen by somebody else and lying dormant” (Vyāsa, I.10)

A *vr̥tti* that occurs within the *citta*, is a metaphysical concept that is being applied to the mind, but specifically an individual. This is evident through language use of words like ‘I’, ‘we’, ‘my’, ‘somebody’, etc. Simply by providing examples, the verses become *personal*. Therefore, it is important to note that although not all the verses on specific *vr̥ttis* *personalize*, they predominantly have a psychological and personal flavor.

Yogasūtra 1.12¹⁴⁹: By practice and detachment the *citta* (mind) is suppressed/stilled.

The analogy of a river is used to describe the mind. The mind flows towards good¹⁵⁰ or evil¹⁵¹. According to Vyāsa, in order to totally inhibit the *vr̥ttis*, one must develop a habit of discrimination and renunciation, respectively (Vyāsa, 1.12). Renunciation in particular, stops the flow of the senses towards sense objects, which in this case is evil, and developing discrimination opens the floodgate of discriminative knowledge. Vyāsa uses the term *sthiti* (tranquility) to describe a mind in a state of undisturbed calmness (1.13). Only by prolonged practice, without break and with

¹⁴⁹ *Abhyāsavairāgyābhyām tannirodhaḥ ||YS, 1.12||*.

¹⁵⁰ Towards *viveka* (discriminative knowledge) ending in *kaivalya* (liberation) (Vyāsa, 35).

¹⁵¹ Towards cycle of re-birth and non-discrimination.

devotion, does practice become firmly instilled (Patañjali, 1.14). Vyāsa expands and uses the terms austerity, continence, learning, reverence and earnest attention in describing practice.

The commentators use impersonal language to describe practice and the manner in which it should be performed. This *sūtra* is *centralized* simply by answer the question: Who is performing practice and detachment? The process of *centralization* is implied when a practice or path is provided. Although impersonal language is used when describing the practice, this verse reveals another determinant of an *SoA* and is much less metaphysical. The verse indicates that by the combination of practice and detachment, the *vṛttis* of the mind are stopped. More specifically, by practice, the mind becomes one-pointed. This indicates that a practitioner can see the results (tranquil or one pointed mind) by consistent, respectful and long-term practice (1.14). This *sūtra* provides the practitioner with a realizable result that can manifest as a result of his practice. Thus, there is a chance that this *sūtra* can evoke an *SoA* through results. Ultimately, practice and detachment provide the reader with an option of a style of practice which the *SK* does not do as much.

Yogasūtra 1.15¹⁵²: When the mind loses all desire for objects seen or described in the scriptures it acquires a state of utter desirelessness which is called detachment.

According to Vyāsa, detachment (*vairāgya*) occurs when,

- A) The mind is indifferent to perceivable objects such as women, food, drinks, power and does not desire after them

¹⁵² *Dr̥ṣṭānuśravikaviṣayavitr̥ṣṇasya vaśīkārasaṅgīṇā vairāgyam* ||YS, 1.15||

- B) The mind does not desire going to heaven or a discarnate state, dissolution into primordial matter
- C) The mind is indifferent to good or evil

This state of detachment is known as *vaśīkāra sañjñā*. Simply put, Vyāsa states what detachment is and its sign. Hariharānanda goes on to describe the four stages of detachment making *vaśīkāra samjñā* the last stage. These were the same stages that were discussed in Vācaspati Miśra's commentary on the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, except in the *Yogasūtra*, these stages are listed in the actual *sūtras*, while in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, they are a part of Vācaspati Miśra's commentary. The state of detachment mentioned in the *Yogasūtra*, *vairāgya*, is equivalent to the *vaśīkāra* stage also mentioned in the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*. *Yatamāna* is the continued and systematic effort of uprooting attachment from the mind. As a result, when one has identified on what one has improved and what is left to improve, one has reached the *vyatireka* stage. In the *ekendriya* stage, the attachment for objects is so weak that it cannot activate any sensory or bodily function and dwells only in the mind as just curiosity with desire (.15). This certainly expands on Vācaspati Miśra's four steps of detachment in *Sāṅkhya*. Therefore, this *sūtra* and its commentaries have weak *personalization* but once again, the state of detachment is naturally *centered* to an individual. The mind is detached; however, it is clear that the language does not point to an “out there” entity but more towards an individualized mind that was once absorbed in the *vṛttis*.

Yogasūtra 1.16¹⁵³: The highest level of indifference/desirelessness to the *guṇas* is achieved from recognition or knowledge of the *puruṣa*.

¹⁵³ *Tat paraṃ puruṣakhyātirguṇavairāgyam ||YS, 1.16||.*

Vairāgya is a state in which a *yogin* becomes totally indifferent to the *guṇas* (material nature). This state is reached when the *yogin* attains knowledge of *puruṣa*. According to Vyāsa, the very practice itself of trying to realize *puruṣa*, allows the *yogin* to attain clear vision¹⁵⁴ and steadiness in *sāttvika* qualities, which subsequently leads to discriminative knowledge (knowledge of *puruṣa*). This is a direct answer to the question: how does one make one's intellect *sāttvika* but also transcend the *guṇas*? With knowledge of *puruṣa*, along with practice/detachment the aspirant becomes more situated in *sattva* and eventually transcends the *guṇas*. According to Hariharānanda, suffering is related to the belief that *buddhi* is pure consciousness (1.17). This false belief terminates once detachment is cultivated. The highest form of detachment is that which is free from *rajas*, because *rajas* interferes with the discernment between *puruṣa* and *buddhi*. Hariharānanda writes "...because a slight excess of dynamic *Rajas* destabilizes that state of discernment" (1.17). Therefore, another reason to eliminate *rajas* is because one cannot determine one's true nature when it is predominant.

Vyāsa writes:

"When detachment appears in the shape of clarified knowledge, the Yogin, with his realization of the nature of Self, thinks thus: 'I have got whatever is to be got; the afflictions which have to be eliminated have been reduced; the continuous chain of birth and death, bound by which men are born and die, and dying are born again...'"

This *sūtra* is highly *personalized*. A realization is explained from the point of view of the *yogin*.

Yogasūtra 1.27¹⁵⁵: The sacred sound *AUM* is the word of Him (*Īśvara*).

¹⁵⁴ Clear vision may refer to seeing reality through *sattva* as it is as opposed to the distortion caused by *tamas*.

¹⁵⁵ *Tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ ||YS, 1.27||*.

The mystic syllable *OM* is another form of *Īśvara*¹⁵⁶. Hariharānanda writes that the “...concept of *Īśvara* cannot be grasped without the help of an appropriate signifying word. Such word-meaning relationship being correlative, the signifying term is eternal: (1.27). It seems that because *Īśvara* is eternal, the word related to him is also eternal. Due to this relation, an aspirant must “Repeat it and contemplate upon its meaning” (1.28). Vyāsa writes that by doing so, one achieves one-pointedness. By repeating mantras the goal of *yoga* becomes firm and by *yoga*, the chanting of *mantras* is improved (Vyāsa, 1.28). As a result, the soul is revealed. This *sūtra* indicates a particular starting point for stilling the mind, more specifically achieving one-pointedness of mind. The practitioner can choose to chant *OM* or other *mantras* for that matter. More generally, *OM* chanting can be viewed as a different starting point for the same path because the practitioner can choose to chant *OM*, while not engaging in *kriyā yoga* and *aṣṭāṅga yoga*. Patañjali does not mention this, but since he mentions the starting points of three practices: *kriyā yoga*, *aṣṭāṅga yoga* and *OM* chanting which certainly do overlap, why can the practitioner not choose one over the other?

By chanting *OM* “...comes realization of the individual self and the obstacles are resolved” (Patañjali, 1.29). Vyāsa writes that obstacles such as illness are removed by devotion to *Īśvara*. The individual self is realized by first recognizing the qualities of *Īśvara*: pure¹⁵⁷, blissful, isolated¹⁵⁸ and unencumbered¹⁵⁹. After realizing these qualities, the aspirant realizes the qualities of one’s own soul. Overall, how is the term *OM* related

¹⁵⁶ *Īśvara* is a term used to function as a position held by an individual’s preferred transcendent deity. E.g. *Shiva*, *Viṣṇu*. Beyond transcendence of *karma*, *kleśa* and time, there are characteristics of *Īśvara* that will not be described in this paper.

¹⁵⁷ Free from sin.

¹⁵⁸ Free from *prakṛti* (material nature).

¹⁵⁹ Free from birth, lifespan and a quality of life that involves suffering.

to the mind? *OM*, an eternal correlate of *Īśvara*, is used to achieve one-pointedness of mind, the removal of obstacles and finally realization of individual self.

There is much *centralizing* in these verses as Vyāsa refers to the relationship between a higher being and the aspirant. Ideas, practices, obstacles are all related to the *yogin*. This provides a highly *personalized* account for the practitioner in comparison to that of the *SK*. After all, it is the *yogin* who is prescribed to chant *OM* to achieve a one pointedness of the mind. Along with a personal reading, the practitioner is also provided with a concrete starting practice and a variety of *mantras*. The combination of a personal reading and an option of *mantras* to chant can provide the aspirant with a strong *SoA*.

Kriyā Yoga & Aṣṭāṅga Yoga

Yogasūtra 2.1¹⁶⁰: *Kriyā yoga* is *tapas* (self-discipline), *svādhyāya* (self-study/study of scripture) and *Īśvara praṇidhāna* (respectful surrender to God).

In the practice of *Kriyā Yoga*, the practitioner is required to diminish the obstacles to *yoga* known as *kleśas* (Patañjali, 2.2). *Tapas*, austerity, are necessary to purify the mind of *vāsanās*¹⁶¹. Supposedly, these *vāsanās* of actions and afflictions have existed from the beginning of time, and due to this, they are very difficult to eradicate from the mind (Vyāsa, 2.1). Thus, *tapas* leads to the removal of these *vāsanās* through cleanliness and purity of mind. Hariharānanda mentions that *tapas* weakens the dominance of *rajas* and *tamas* in the mind and includes celibacy, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, fasting etc. He explains *tapas* as a practice to discipline the body while the other two steps of *kriyā yoga* lead to the discipline of the organs of speech and mind (Hariharānanda, 2.1). Rāmānanda

¹⁶⁰ *Tapahsvādhyāyeśvarapraṇidhānāni kriyāyogaḥ* ||YS, 2.1||.

¹⁶¹ *Vāsanā* has three psychologically relevant definitions from the Monier Williams dictionary: “the impression of anything remaining unconscious in the mind, the present consciousness of past perceptions, knowledge derived from past memories.” The most applicable definition would be the first: unconscious impressions.

Sarasvatī agrees and expands because, in his opinion, *tapas* involves celibacy, devotion towards a *guru*, truth telling, vow of silence, performing duties based on stages in life, endurance of opposites (heat & cold or pain & pleasure), and moderate eating (2.1).

Vyāsa simply states *svādhyāya* as the repetition of *OM* and the study of scriptures relating to liberation. Finally, Vyāsa states that *Īśvara-praṇidhāna* involves surrendering all actions such as the desire for the fruits of one's actions to *Īśvara*.

Hariharānanda writes,

“The three-fold practice results in withdrawal from external activities, leading to pacification of the organs of action and perception, and dawning of detachment and forbearance, all of which enhance the competence of the devotee for practicing concentration” (2.1).

In this portion concerning *tapas*, *centralization* occurs in a broader sense. Vyāsa uses the example of a **man without discipline** to demonstrate how the goal of *yoga* cannot be reached without *tapas*. He also writes that a *yogin* should follow an undisturbed path of purification. Here, the words *man* and *yogin* provide the practitioner with ideal terms that represent the standards to which he should strive. This is also contributing to an *SoA* by attaching the practice to a notion of “I”. Who is the individual performing these three limbs of *kriyā yoga*? Rāmānanda Sarasvatī uses phrases like “one's preceptor,” “one's thought,” “one's stage of life,” and “one's actions,” to describe *svādhyāya* and *praṇidhāna* to *Īśvara*. Overall, there is a medium to high amount of *personalization* in this *sūtra*.

As explained before, *samādhi* is synonymous with a still mind (absence of *vṛttis*) or consciousness abiding in its own nature. *Kriyā yoga* allows for this particular result by weakening the obstacles to *yoga*: *kleśas*. This is a necessary step because *samādhi* cannot occur when *kleśas* are active in the mind (Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, 2.2). Discriminative knowledge attenuates the obstacles and as a result, finding the distinction between *puruṣa*

and *buddhi* is not hindered. According to Hariharānanda, discriminative enlightenment is the finishing touch to the *kleśas* (which are already thinned down). These weakened *kleśas*, like roasted seeds, are not yet removed but remain inactive in the mind. He writes that these roasted seeds cannot create any more afflictive modifications. The only modifications that can occur are those that help discriminate the difference between *puruṣa* and *buddhi*. To reiterate, *kriyā yoga* weakens the *kleśas* and with the emergence of discriminative knowledge, the latter destroys them.

Kleśas

Kleśas are known as the impediments to *yoga*, in other words the impediments to stilling the mind (*samādhi*). There are five in number: *avidyā* (ignorance/misapprehension)¹⁶², *asmitā* (egoism)¹⁶³, *rāga* (desire, attachment)¹⁶⁴, *dveṣa* (aversion)¹⁶⁵ and *abhiniveśa* (clinging to life, fear of death)¹⁶⁶ (Patañjali, 2.3).

Hariharānanda writes, “When *Kleśas* become active, they infiltrate into both latent and overt parts of *Citta*, and strengthening the sway of the *Guṇas* they tune the mind to worldly activities” [sic!] (2.3).

Yogasūtra 2.5¹⁶⁷: *Avidyā* (ignorance) is the perception of the self, pleasure, purity and eternity on that which is not-self, painful, impure and transient.

Avidyā, is known as ignorance/misidentification and is the breeding ground of the other *kleśas* (whether dormant, attenuated, interrupted or active) (Patañjali, 2.4). The previous *sūtra*, 2.4, reveals that *avidyā* is the main impediment, the ground where all the

¹⁶² Misapprehension about the real nature of things.

¹⁶³ Egoism.

¹⁶⁴ Attachment.

¹⁶⁵ Aversion.

¹⁶⁶ Fear of death.

¹⁶⁷ *Anityāśuciduḥkhānātmāsu nityaśucisukhātmakhyātiravidyā* ||YS, 2.5||.

other impediments thrive. This indicates that the other *kleśas* depend on ignorance. By attacking ignorance, the other impediments will be affected as well. One who has attained discriminative knowledge, the seeds of the *kleśas* are weakened, so even if sense objects appear before him, they do not become active. Here the ideal supplementary term “one” along with the pronoun him is used. As mentioned before, *kleśas* exist in four states. A *yogin* who has weakened his *kleśas* is proficient in self-conquest and is in his last bodily frame. In these types of *yogins* the *kleśas* reach the fifth state that are like burnt up seeds. Ultimately, the weakened *kleśas* are destroyed when the productivity of the mind is completed¹⁶⁸. The ideal term *yogin*¹⁶⁹ with a genitive relationship to the term mind is used to indicate that once the goal is accomplished, the mind will disappear into its original matrix. Throughout the commentary, the term *yogin* is used constantly with reference to the four states of the *kleśas*. This personalizes the experience of a practitioner interacting with obstacles of the mind.

Avidyā has four¹⁷⁰ crucial components. First, a *citta* in *avidyā* sees a transient object as permanent. Vyāsa states that seeing the transient moon, stars, world, sky and heavenly beings as permanent is *avidyā*. The second component is seeing an impure object as pure. This refers to the body itself as disgusting because “...of its place (of origin), of its germinal source (1), of its constituent factors, of its secretions, of its disintegration and of its adventitious purity” (2.5). The body itself is unclean and impure: Vyāsa provides an example of seeing a maiden who is very beautiful with an amazing body as pure, but in truth, is not the case because this beauty will fade. The third component, is seeing misery as happiness: Vyāsa explains that all worldly objects are

¹⁶⁸ *Te pratiprasavaheyāḥ sukṣmā ||YS, 2.10||.*

¹⁶⁹ *Te pañca kleśā dagdhavījakalpā yoginaścaritādhikāre cetasi praline saha tenaivāstaṁ gacchanti |* (Vyāsa, 129).

¹⁷⁰ *Anityāśuciduḥkḥānātmasu nityaśucisukhātmakhyātiravidyā ||YS, 2.5||.*

painful and sorrowful, because they cause suffering due to the nature of the *guṇas* which produces changes (2.5).

The fourth and most important component is seeing the not-self as self. The self or *puruṣa* is eternal, changeless, infinite, etc. When one looks upon the material world and considers objects or even the mind as a part of one's self, then one is considering the not self to be the self. *Avidyā* is the most important *kleśa* that needs to be weakened because all other impediments are weakened when *avidyā* is. Once again, the *kleśas* need to be eliminated in order to still the mind, because by nature, the *kleśas* are impediments to *yoga*. It is important to note here that with reference to the final point, *avidyā* is similar to 'non-discrimination' in *Sāṅkhya*. *Avidyā* involves seeing the 'non-self' as the self, and 'non-discrimination' involves seeing *prakṛti* as *puruṣa*.

Vyāsa uses the ideal term, **discriminating people**¹⁷¹, to represent a type of people who see all worldly objects as sorrowful because they see the suffering involved in it. The term **one** is used to describe a person in *avidyā* who looks upon objects as his own.

With regards to *centralization*, Vyāsa writes "So also it is Avidya when one looks upon things as one's own, when these are not so. For instance, people look upon external objects, other persons, animals, even one's own body and mind, which are the seat and instrument of experience, as constituting one's own Self or Purusa, while in reality these are not so" (Vyāsa, 2.5). Applying the phenomenon of ignorance to an individual's perception is enough to indicate the process of *personalizing*. This is due to the 'I' being introduced in the form of one's possessions. Rāmānanda Sarasvati writes "Those who are engaged in the performance of actions (as the means of attaining *Yoga*) have their

¹⁷¹ "*pariṇāmatāpasamśkāraduḥkhaiguṇavṛttivirodhāccaduḥkhameva sarvaṃ vivekinaḥ*" (Vyāsa, 132).

afflictions weakened. In the case of those who are attached to worldly objects, their afflictions are either interrupted or manifested” (2.4). *Kleśas* are essentially a combination of the *guṇas*, they are purely metaphysical. An impersonal definition of *kleśa* can simply be ignorance. However, Vyāsa extends the definition of *kleśa* to refer to an individual’s point of view. This is *centralized* because he is directly attributing this erroneous cognition (metaphysical *kleśa*) to people.

Yogasūtra 2.6¹⁷²: *Asmitā* is like identifying the *puruṣa* (observer) and *buddhi* (seeing intellect) as one and the same.

The next *kleśas* is ego, known as *asmitā*.¹⁷³ Vyāsa states that ego is seeing the *puruṣa* and *buddhi* as the same. He states that *puruṣa* is absolute awareness and *buddhi* is an instrument of knowing. One is confusing pure awareness and the subtlest instrument of knowing (2.6). When they appear united, this is called experience. *Asmitā* (I am’ness) itself is the process of *centralizing*. The word “I” is in the language. One could argue that *centralizing* is “*ahaṁkāra*’ing” or “*asmitā*’ing”. Vyāsa adds a quote by *Āchārya* Pañchaśikha: “When one fails to see that Purusa is different from Buddhi by virtue of his immaculateness, immutability and metapsychic consciousness, one regards Buddhi as the true self through delusion (2)” (Vyāsa, 2.6). Here, the example of *asmitā* is seen from the point of view of a person. This adds further to the effect of *personalizing*.

Hariharānanda states that this false identification of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* leads to misapprehensions like “I am happy,” “I am in distress.” These misapprehensions lead people to *bhoga* (experiencing pleasure and pain). In this misapprehension, what people strongly believe to be the state of *puruṣa*/the self, is in reality the experience of the

¹⁷² *Dṛgdarśanaśaktyorekātmatevā ’smitā* ||YS, 2.6||.

¹⁷³ In *Sāṅkhya*, the word ego is translated as *ahaṁkāra*.

buddhi being presented to *puruṣa*. Once someone understands the difference between these two, these false identifications of “I am this” and “I am that” disappear and no longer arise. Desire and aversion no longer enter the mind.

Vyāsa quotes Pañchaśikha and states that when one fails to see that *puruṣa* is different from *buddhi*, then he regards *buddhi* as his true self by delusion¹⁷⁴. It is here that the term *apuśyan* indicates “he” or “one” observed and *ātmabuddhim* as “one’s” own *buddhi*.

Yogasūtra 2.7¹⁷⁵: Desire/Attachment is what follows after pleasure.

Attachment (*rāga*) is the thirst/hankering after pleasure (Vyāsa, 125). *Rāga* is specifically the act of desiring. This strong desire/hankering comes from a previously experienced pleasure which is most probably in the form of a *saṃskāra*. In order to have *rāga*, one must have had a previous experience of that which one is desiring. For example, in order to have a chocolate craving, one must have previously experienced the pleasure of chocolate. Furthermore, Hariharānanda writes that when one experiences pleasure, the experience itself leaves a subliminal imprint in the form of *vāsanā* (491). This *vāsanā* bring forward a memory of pleasure in the mind (making it keen) and subsequently creates *rāga* for that object. This verse is already *centralized* as Vyāsa refers to an individual chasing pleasure due to a metaphysical *kleśa* which exists in the *citta*. The thirst for pleasure comes from one who has experienced pleasure before¹⁷⁶. The term *yaḥ* is a correlative pronoun indicating “who”, but often said as “he who”. (

Yogasūtra 2.8¹⁷⁷: Aversion is that (modification) which results from misery.

¹⁷⁴ “*buddhitāḥ paraṃ puruṣamākāraśīlavidyādibhirvibhaktamapaśyankuryātatrātmabuddhimohena*” iti | (Vyāsa, 123).

¹⁷⁵ *Sukhānuśayī rāgaḥ* ||YS, 2.7||.

¹⁷⁶ *Sukhābhijñāsyā sukhānusr̥tipūrvāḥ sukhe tatsādhane vā yo garddhastr̥ṣṇā lobhaḥ sa rāga iti* | (124).

¹⁷⁷ *Dukhānuśayī dveṣaḥ* ||YS, 2.8||.

According to Vyāsa, “...aversion is the feeling of opposition, mental disinclination, propensity to hurt and anger towards misery or objects producing misery.” Much like *rāga*, this occurs when one has experienced such a misery before. From recollection of this misery, one has created a strong sense of aversion towards the object of misery. According to Hariharānanda, with aversion, one feels an urge to exterminate this past sorrow and what had brought it about.

Hariharānanda describes a type of aversion known as *pratigha* which originates in *pratighāta* (obstruction) which is the “...urge to retaliate and get rid of what had stood in one’s way earlier” (Hariharānanda, 2.8). He goes on to say that when one has no aversion, one has nothing to oppose, but with aversion, opposition is at every step. Although subtle, there is *personalizing* because the act of aversion is not only associated to the mind but is also associated to the individual’s mind.

Yogasūtra 2.9¹⁷⁸: As in the ignorant so in the learned the firmly established inborn fear of annihilation is the affliction called *abhiniveśa*.

This *kleśa* is known as having the craving “Let me never be non-existent; let me be alive.” Ingrained within every being is the fear of death, in other words, the desire to keep living. According to Vyāsa, much like *rāga* and *dveṣa*, *abhiniveśa* must be present in a person who has experienced death before because it is most likely linked to *saṃskāras*. Rāmānanda Sarasvati writes that “Excessive clinging for life consists in anxiety due to fear which is well-known and spontaneous and which is found in the learned one too (as in the ignorant)” (2.9). *Abhiniveśa* contributes to anxiety and fear, and clearly acts as a hindrance to the path of *yoga*. Vyāsa states that one’s intelligence¹⁷⁹ is

¹⁷⁸ *Svarasavāhī viduṣo ’pi tathārūḍho ’bhiniveśaḥ ||YS, 2.9||.*

¹⁷⁹ A learned and unlearned person are both affected by this. Here intelligence should not be used synonymously with *buddhi*-intellect because if it was, a developed intellect would only serve to clear

unrelated with one's fear of death because both a learned man and an idiot have this inbuilt fear. Furthermore, the commentator makes it clear that fear of death implies that the self is different from the physical body (2.9). One is clearly afraid of losing the body, therefore, this also indicates that *avidyā* (identification with the body and mind) is the root of the fear of death.

Centralization in this *sūtra* is a bit tricky as the psychological state of fear is related to the individual. The *citta* (a metaphysical entity) is being viewed by a psychological microscope by being individuated. The desire to never die is attributed to the individual in a quotation: "May I never not-exist, may I live." In addition, the term one is accompanied with the labels **learned man** and **idiot**. Although the reader may identify with one of these labels, likely the first, the text does not necessarily encourage the reader to be a learned man in this *sūtra* but instead introduces the idea that a successful *yogin* will not have *abhiniveśa*.

Yogasūtra 2.10¹⁸⁰: The subtle *kleśas* are forsaken (i.e. destroyed) by the cessation of productivity (i.e. disappearance of the mind).

Once the fluctuations of the *citta* are stilled and the goal of *samādhi* is attained, the material *citta* will merge into its original matrix (*prakṛti*). At the same time, within the *citta*, the *kleśas* become like parched seeds and also disappear. Therefore, the five *kleśas* disappear only when the *citta* disappears. Until then, they are gradually being weakened through practice. In fact, the following *sūtra* states that the *kleśas*, in their gross form, can be weakened through meditation¹⁸¹. Vyāsa writes that through the path of

abhiniveśa rather than harbor it. Thus, the word intelligence here must be of some other type of intelligence. (find the Sanskrit)

¹⁸⁰ *Te pratiprasavaheyāḥ sūkṣmāḥ* ||YS, 2.10||.

¹⁸¹ *Dhyānaheyāstadvṛtayah* ||YS, 2.11||.

kriyā yoga, the *kleśas* are weakened and are finally destroyed by *prasaṅkhyāna* (discriminative knowledge).

Subtle *kleśas* (specifically weakened impediments in a mind with discriminative knowledge) are eliminated by the dissolution of the mind. In a mind with discriminative discernment only a small portion of ego (*asmitā*) can exist, but when the mind is dissolved, *asmitā* is dissolved with it. Discriminative knowledge ends volition and sensation in the mind, and the latent *kleśas* become weaker. The five *kleśas* become like parched seeds and disappear along with the mind of the *yogin*. *SoA* can be generated through the term ***yogin*** which can be interpreted as an *ideal term* for one who has achieved *samādhi* when his *citta* and its *kleśas* disappear. Similarly, an *SoA* can be generated through promised, unverifiable results in the sense that if the practitioner engages in *kriyā yoga* and attains discriminative knowledge, then the *kleśas* will be weakened.

Yogasūtra 2.14¹⁸²: Because of virtuous action and sinful action, these produce pleasurable and painful experiences.

This *sūtra* demonstrates that by the nature one's actions, one is expected to face corresponding consequences. This idea of *karma* suggests a power cause-effect relationship placing responsibility on the practitioner. In addition, Vyāsa states that the ***yogin*** not only avoids pain but also the enjoyment of pleasant objects because he clearly sees that this also involves great pain. This potentially demonstrates the fleeting and temporary quality of pleasurable experiences demonstrated in other *sūtras*. An *SoA* can be demonstrated by the use of the ideal term *yogin* which is used to portray a wise

¹⁸² *Te hlādaparitāpaphalāḥ puṇyāpuṇyahetutvāt ||YS, 2.14||.*

practitioner who knows that a pleasurable experience is similar to a painful experience in the sense that both produce pain. Similarly, a power *SoA* may be generated through results because a practitioner may feel that his virtuous and immoral actions lead to pleasurable and painful results, respectively.

Yogasūtra 2.15¹⁸³: The discriminating people perceive all (of the world) as painful because of the changing *guṇas* (matter) by the pain in *saṃskāras* (mental imprints) because of the in their afflictive experiences and in their latent tendencies and also because of the contrary nature of the *guṇas* which produce changes all the time.

A discriminative person, *vivekin*, is able to see pain even in pleasurable experiences. A desire for the pleasure of sense objects is ignorance because it involves a cyclical process. When the thirst for an object is gratified, the mind feels temporarily calm. When the thirst emerges, the mind feels restless. Thus, the practitioner is advised that spiritual enjoyment can never be attained through sense enjoyment because the senses cannot renounce because enjoyment increases attachment and the adroitness of the senses. This only involves great misery to the *yogin*. Therefore, in seeking happiness, the adverse experiences of change cause great pain to the *yogin*. Vyāsa continues to explain different types of pain and repeatedly uses the term *yogin*. This *ideal term* can generate an *SoA* by indicating what the practitioner is supposed be like by avoiding certain actions and adopting a certain mentality of wisdom. The practitioner, reading the commentary, is not only advised to adopt a detached mentality but is also intricately explained why to firmly adopt it.

Aṣṭāṅga Yoga

¹⁸³ *Pariṇāmatāpasaṃskāraduḥkhairguṇavṛttivirodhācca duḥkhameva sarvaṃ vivekinaḥ* ||YS, 2.14||.

Yogasūtra 2.28¹⁸⁴. With reference to the destruction of impurities, the light of knowledge emerges from the practice of the limbs of *yoga* (*aṣṭāṅga yoga*) from discriminative knowledge.

Vyāsa states that when practicing *aṣṭāṅga yoga*, the five forms of ignorance (impurities) are reduced or destroyed and subsequently true knowledge manifests (Vyāsa, 2.28). Also the distinction between *puruṣa* and the *guṇas* is known. An analogy is given that practicing the limbs of *yoga* removes the impurities like an axe severing wood. Consistent practice of the limbs will give discriminative knowledge. Hariharānanda states that increase of knowledge is directly proportional to the decreasing of impurities. Thus, the path of *yoga*, along with *kriyā yoga* and practice and detachment in Chapter 1 all move towards the greater goal. However, note that *aṣṭāṅga yoga* specifically creates discriminative enlightenment. This indicates a highly important detail: The results of one's actions are promised, and depending on the practitioner's belief, they can contribute to an *SoA*. He writes "As the practices are performed, the impurities are attenuated and correspondingly the lustre of knowledge increases until discriminative enlightenment is attained, *i.e.* the true nature of the distinction between Purusa and the Gunas is known" (2.28).

It is important to note the difference here between the end goals of the *SK* and *YS*. In the *SK*, *viññāna* (discrimination) is the ultimate means. However, in the *YS*, after one attains *viveka* (*viññāna* in the *YS*), one is required to surrender that last *vṛtti* and consequently, still the mind (*samādhi*). The stilling of the mind is an extra step after discriminative knowledge. The practice of *aṣṭāṅga yoga* itself is *personalizing* because it is a providing path that cultivates the metaphysical *vṛtti* of discrimination within the *citta*.

¹⁸⁴ *Yogāṅgānuṣṭhānādaśuddhikṣaye jñānadīptirāvivekakhyāteḥ ||YS, 2.28||*.

It is providing another option in addition to practice and dispassion. Once again, the more options, the higher *SoA*. Thus, this metaphysical process is being directly applied to the individual and transformed into a psychological process. The following *sūtras* will allow the reader to get a *personal* and *centered* feel of the text compared to the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*.

Yogasūtra 2.30¹⁸⁵: The *yamas* (restraints) are *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (celibacy) and *aparigraha* (non-coveting).

The first *aṅga* (limb) of the path to attain *viveka* is *yamas* which are five in number. *Ahiṃsā* represents non-violence or the abstention from hurting any being at all times. The other *yamas*¹⁸⁶ are based off of this one. *Satya* refers to telling the truth in speech. One should speak only for the purpose of communication without deceit, delusive and meaningless intentions. Words should only be uttered for benefit and not to inflict harm. *Asteya* refers to refraining from stealing things that belong to others. *Brahmacharya* is suppressing one's sexual activity (celibacy). *Aparigraha* is refraining from wanting things (non-coveting) because according to Vyāsa they create trouble and decay.

The commentary of this *sūtra* is highly *centralized* as the words “one,” “others,” “*brāhmaṇa*,” “self-restraint,” “person,” “women,” and “her” are used in relation to conduct. In fact, it is highly difficult to speak in a metaphysical sense by separating these codes of conduct from the individual. The *yamas* are clearly rules and conduct that an individual must follow indicating a drastic difference from the instructions of the *SK*. There are plenty of examples of promised results from one's actions because one can see character traits after the practice of *yamas*. For instance, when the *yogin* is firm in

¹⁸⁵ *Ahiṃsāsatyāsteyabrahmacaryāparigrahā yamāḥ* ||YS, 2.30||.

¹⁸⁶ *Yamas* are universal, not restricted to time, place or life circumstance ||YS, 2.31||.

ahimsā, sentient beings in his presence cease to be hostile (Patañjali, 2.35). When *satya* is cultivated, the *yogin*'s words become true (Patañjali, 2.36). When one tells another to be virtuous, the latter becomes virtuous (Vyāsa, 2.36). When the *yogin* cultivates non-stealing, everything naturally comes to him/her (Patañjali, 2.37). When celibacy is established, the *yogin* attains power (Patañjali, 2.38). There are verses that can directly contribute to one's *SoA* by clearly explaining the results of one's practice.

Yogasūtra 2.32¹⁸⁷: The *niyamas* (observances) are *śauca* (cleanliness), *santoṣa* (contentment), *tapas* (mental and physical austerity), *svādhyāya* (study of scriptures and chanting of *mantras*) and *Īśvara praṇidhāna* (devotion to God).

Vyāsa states that cleanliness is external¹⁸⁸ and internal¹⁸⁹. Contentment involves being satisfied with one's basic necessities and not desiring anything more than needed. Austerity involves the ability to handle conditions of heat and cold, hunger and thirst, standing/sitting calmly and sometimes, the absence of speech and fasting for religious vows. Study of scriptures involves studying *śāstras* (for liberation) and repeating *AUM*. Finally, devotion to God means surrendering all actions to *Īśvara*.

The reader might have noticed how the first three *niyamas* are the same as the steps in *kriyā-yoga*. Hariharānanda clarifies that cleanliness involves eating pure food (not stale or rotten food). He states that "Uncleanliness imbibed from contact with external objects also makes the mind dirty" (2.33). Thus, one must maintain external cleanliness so the mind can also maintain its cleanliness. Internal cleanliness involves removing negative emotions (impurities of the mind) like "...arrogance, ego, inability to endure others' prosperity, jealousy, ascribing faults (where there are none) wrongly to

¹⁸⁷ *Śaucasantoṣatapaḥsvādhyāyeśvarapraṇidhānāni niyamāḥ* ||YS, 1.32||.

¹⁸⁸ Daily washing, eating pure food.

¹⁸⁹ Removal of impurities of the mind.

others, bearing ill will etc.” (2.33). According to Vyāsa, the aspirant who practices cleanliness gets heart purification leading to mental bliss/joy. Following this bliss comes one-pointedness following subdued senses. After the senses are subdued, the *buddhi* becomes firm in the ability to realize the self (2.41).

Not only are these verses *centralized*, but they also provide the aspirant with an *SoA* through cause and effect. For example, when one practices cleanliness, one develops an aversion towards one’s body and other bodies (Patañjali, 2.40). Once again, through cleanliness, mental bliss and joy emerge (2.41). From practicing contentment, unsurpassed happiness is gained (2.42). Also, when impurities are destroyed and austerities are practiced, the perfection of the body and organs results (2.43). By study and repeating *mantras*¹⁹⁰, one can communicate with one’s desired deity (2.44). Finally, from devotion to *Īśvara*, *samādhi* is attained (2.45). Clearly, the *niyamas* indicate a cause and effect relationship where the practitioner may feel an *SoA* indicating that if he puts in effort, these results may occur.

What happens when one finds opposition to the *yamas* and *niyamas* in the form of disturbing thoughts? Patañjali suggests that the individual should actively find contrasting (more positive) thoughts to overcome the intrusive pervasive thoughts (2.33). For instance, Vyāsa states that if one has the thought, “I shall speak untruth,” he should think “I took refuge in the virtues of *yoga* by promising security to all living beings” (2.3). This functions to act as a reminder of one’s conviction towards non-violence and the path itself. It seems that while practicing the *yamas* and *niyamas*, oppositions may arise and one should constantly and vigilantly have countering thoughts. It seems that Patañjali is

¹⁹⁰ A *mantra* is a phrase, saying or verse that is often chanted with a particular meter and repeated a set number of times.

suggesting that with the goal in mind, one should to have these thoughts or create these *vr̥ttis* in order to neutralize or weaken the previous *vr̥ttis*. Opposing *vr̥ttis* must be neutralized because they can potentially pose a threat to the path. In addition to the centralizing word “I”, this *sūtra* may offer the practitioner an *SoA* because he is actively thinking of counteracting thoughts. By one’s effort and creativity in producing these thoughts, one has the opportunity to witness one’s result¹⁹¹.

Results of Personal Effort (Tangible & Promised)

Yogasūtra 1.21¹⁹²: Nearness (to *samādhi*) among those *yogins* with keen intensity.

This *sūtra* indicates a straightforward principle: the *yogin*¹⁹³ who is vigilant and hardworking will achieve results more quickly. In other words, more input equals more output. *SoA* is ascribed here by the ideal term *yogin* and by promised results. If performed intensely, the cause is effort and the result is the goal of *yoga*. This *sūtra* may generate an *SoA* by promising a measurable result. That is, if the practitioner starts to feel psychological and mental health benefits from meditation and eating a particular diet, the practitioner can experience an *SoA*. The idea that one who invests more intensity will reap more benefits is a general concept. In any area, whether it be bodybuilding, learning a language, etc., a result can be arguably more efficient when the individual inputs more intensity in the work.

¹⁹¹ In this case, one can infer that a successful result is a counteracting thought that defeated the original disturbing thought. And, so once the original thought is defeated, the practitioner can say “I have defeated the previous thought.”

¹⁹² *Tīvr̥saṃvegānām āsannaḥ* ||YS, 1.22||.

¹⁹³ *Te khalu nava yoginaḥ mṛdumadhyādhimātropāyā bhavanti, tadyathā mṛdūpāyaḥ, madhyopāyaḥ, adhimātropāya iti* | (Vyāsa, 54).

Yogasūtra 1.22¹⁹⁴: Among those who are intense, there are differences in effort: slow, medium and speedy.

Patañjali states that even within intensity of practice, there are three ways a practitioner can invest in his practice: slow, medium and speedy. Vyāsa states that results will come to those who practice slowly and medium paced by the fastest way to ensure progress is to practice at the third level: speedy. Once again, an *SoA* can be generated by the term *yogin* which is stated in both the *sūtra* and commentary which are directly attributed to the practitioner who is exerting the effort with different levels of intensity. Arguably, an *SoA* can be generated if the practitioner feels there is a choice that can be made between the three pace options.

In a similar manner, the practitioner is promised high meditative states that may or may not be measurable although there is ample evidence that shows meditation can lead to changes in theta and alpha brain waves (Lagopoulos, Xu, Rasmussen, Vik, Malhi, M.D., Eliassen, Arntsen, Sæther, Hollup, Davanger & Ellingsen, 2009). Meditation also alters the structure and function of the brain (Davidson & Lutz, 2008). *Sūtras* that promise alterations in mental states offer offer tangible and measurable results validated by many psychological studies.

This is an evident *sūtra* indicating that one's actions are related to the results. In other words, there is a direct cause-effect relationship between one's sincere efforts and outcome of practice. There is nothing comparable to this in the *SK*. I will present several *sūtras* in succession that indicate efforts related to results. These statements can be viewed as a series of "if-then" statements that involve the practitioner's effort followed

¹⁹⁴ *Mṛumadhyādhimātratvāttato 'pi viśeṣa || YS, 1.22||*.

by his results. Once again, the purpose of listing the following *sūtras* is to provide the reader with a clear indication that the practitioner can get a predominant *SoA* from witnessing promised results.

Yogasūtra 1.23¹⁹⁵: Or from *Īśvara Praṇidhāna* (the mind is stilled/suppressed).

Through *Īśvara praṇidhāna*, devotion to God, the *yogin* attains the blessings of God, which is in the form the former's wish fulfilment, *samādhi* and liberation. An *SoA* can be measured in three ways. First, the ideal term *yogin* is used. Second, the practitioner is promised an empirically unverifiable result that depends on the strength of his belief. Third, the practitioner gets to choose upon which God to meditate which may generate an *SoA* through choice variety.

Yogasūtra 1.33¹⁹⁶: The *citta* (mind) becomes serene/clear by treating sense objects (people) that are sinful, virtuous, painful and pleasurable with indifference, joy, compassion and friendliness, respectively.

The practitioner is advised to cultivate positive feelings towards the happy, compassion towards the suffering, and indifference towards the evil ones. This thought process requires one's effort and practice. The practitioner is promised that virtue which leads to a pure mind, which leads to a one-pointed mind that begets serenity. *SoA* may occur in the *yogin* through a decision that is made and a promised result. After sufficient practice the individual is promised to experience a purified, content mind. Data shows that compassionate meditation changes brain structures (Lutz, Brefczynski-Lewis,

¹⁹⁵ *Īśvarapraṇidhānādvā* ||YS, 1.23||.

¹⁹⁶ *Maitrīkaruṇāmuditopekṣaṇām sukhaduḥkhaṇyāpuṇyaviṣayānāmbhāvanātaścittaprasādanam* ||YS, 1.33||.

Johnstone & Davidson, 2008). Therefore, if a practitioner practices compassion and feels the results of these promises, then he has great potential to feel an *SoA*.

Rāmānanda Sarasvati writes that when the individual acts in this manner the mind becomes clear by the removal of the *rajas* and *tamas guṇas*. The individual has direct control over the decreasing of these *guṇas*, and through a promised result oriented cause-effect relationship, he may develop a clear *SoA*.

Yogasūtra 1.34¹⁹⁷: By exhaling and restraining the breath also (the mind is stilled).

The commentary states that by *pracchadarna* (exhalation) and *vidhāraṇa* (restraint) of the *prāṇa* (breath) the practitioner will certainly attain calmness/firmness of the mind¹⁹⁸. Although at first glance the directions may seem vague, further inquiry into other commentaries and modern practices in temples, religious meetings, meditation communities will show how these breathing techniques are performed. On “...exhaling with special care so that the mind remains at the desired place during expulsion of the internal air...and so “...continuing such practice without any break the mind is to be made one-pointed” (Hariharānanda, 1.34). This *sūtra* is a great example of practice producing a result that the practitioner can personally witness. For instance, a research study conclusively demonstrates that the *Sudarśana Kriyā* (SKY), coined by the Art of Living foundation, is a breathing practice that retains *yogic* breathing techniques involving (*ujjāyī*, *bhastrikā*) that alleviate anxiety, depression, everyday stress, post-traumatic stress and stress related medical illnesses (Brown & Gerbarg, 2005). In addition, a study shows that *prāṇāyāma* breathing significantly reduces test anxiety in test performance (Nemati, 2013). There is ample data to demonstrate how breathing is

¹⁹⁷ *Praccharddanavidhāraṇābhyāṃ vā prāṇasya* ||YS, 1.34||.

¹⁹⁸ *Tābhyāṃ vā manasaḥ sthitiṃ sampādayet* | (Vyāsa, 78).

related to psychological health. The practitioner who practices these techniques rooted in the *Yogasūtra* and finds results that are proven by science, may feel a generated *SoA*. *SoA* is measured through promised and verifiable results, there is ample psychological evidence showing that the control of breath leads to mental calmness.

Yogasūtra 1.35¹⁹⁹: Focus towards a sense objects called *viṣayavatī* arises and also brings the tranquility of mind.

This *sūtra* indicates that when a practitioner develops higher perceptions of smell, taste, touch and sound from meditating on specific areas on the body, this “...stabilizes the mind firmly, removes doubts and forms the gateway to knowledge acquirable through concentration” (Vyāsa, 1.35).

Vyāsa also adds that when an individual has a direct perception of certain topics in the *śāstra*²⁰⁰, then he will develop faith in other matters like liberation. As a result, then the mind will gain faith, energy, remembrance and *samādhi*. In other words, concentrating on specific areas of the body will lead to super sensuous experiences, and this in turn will lead to a solid sense of faith (removal of doubts) in other matters mentioned in the texts. Thus, doubts are removed by one’s own effort. In addition, Rāmānanda Sarasvatī writes that when a *yogin* experiences these things, he “...strives to concentrate his mind upon an object although it is extremely subtle, with firm belief” (1.35). The practitioner may feel a generated *SoA* when he actively chooses to concentrate on a specific area and experiences the result as a powerful concentrative experience. If not, the mechanism of belief in promised results may function to generate an *SoA*.

¹⁹⁹ *Viṣayavatī vā pravṛttirutpannā manasaḥ sthitiṇibandhanī* ||YS, 1.35||.

²⁰⁰ Sacred texts/scriptures.

Yogasūtra 1.36²⁰¹: Or by perception which is free from sorrow and is radiant (stability of mind can also be produced).

By concentrating on the innermost part of the heart, one attains knowledge of the *buddhi* (intellect). When the practitioner continuously maintains this concentration, the *buddhi* is seen as resembling the bright sun, moon, planet, jewel etc. Similarly, when one concentrates on pure I-sense, ego, which is made of pure *sattva*, one gets a similar vision. He attains the vision of “I am”. From this, the mind of the *yogin* becomes stable. An *SoA* can be generated through a promised result of a calm mind emerging from active concentration on the heart center and through the use of the *ideal term* “*yogin*.”

Yogasūtra 1.37²⁰²: Or (contemplating) on a mind which is free from desires (the devotees mind gets stabilized).

The *yogin* who focuses his mind on an individual who has desire-less mind will also develop that quality of desirelessness in his own mind. Rāmānanda Sarasvatī gives examples of people like Vyāsa²⁰³ or Śuka²⁰⁴. The cause is meditation on a desire-less mind and the effect is a desire-less mind. The practitioner may feel an *SoA* simply by choosing a role model figure. He may feel that he has achieved a stable mind by effort on an object, which he has freely chosen from a multitude of choices. In addition, the *ideal term* “*yogin*” is used again.

²⁰¹ *Viśokā vā jyotiṣmatī* ||YS, 1.36||.

²⁰² *Vītarāgaviṣayaṃ vā cittam* ||YS, 1.37||.

²⁰³ A sage associated with compiling and ordering the *Vedas*. In addition, he is accredited to writing many works and commentaries in Vedic and Hindu literature.

²⁰⁴ A sage associated with the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*, a text associated with *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa. He is considered to be the son of Vyāsa.

Yogasūtra 1.39²⁰⁵: Or by contemplating on whatsoever thing one may like (the mind becomes stable).

The cause here indicates any object of meditation (suitable for *yoga*), and the effect is a stable mind. The practitioner voluntarily chooses an object like the moon, and from his choice followed by consistent practice, he can achieve a stabilized mind. An *SoA* may emerge especially because the practitioner has chosen an object based his preference.

The *sūtras* listed above demonstrate that by one's effort, one can still or calm one's mind. In the *YS*, there is an abundance of *sūtras* indicating that one's actions are directly related to one's results. In fact, almost the entirety of chapter three (supernatural powers), is dedicated to performing *saṃyama*²⁰⁶ on certain areas to attain these *siddhis*.

Another practice involves a psychologically cognitive component which states that whenever one's practice is inhibited by perverted thoughts, one should think of opposites²⁰⁷. Vyāsa writes that when one gets thoughts like “I shall kill him who hurts me, I shall speak untruth, I shall take things, I shall commit adultery with his wife, I shall take things belonging to others” he should encourage contrary thoughts. He should think “I took refuge in Yoga by promising security. I should not behave like a dog.” Here there is the personal pronoun “I” used to refer to an ideal *yogin* with conviction in the path. This may also contribute to the *yogin's SoA*.

Sense of Agency through Siddhis

²⁰⁵ *Yathābhimatadhyānādvā || YS, 1.39||*.

²⁰⁶ *Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, Samādhi*.

²⁰⁷ *Vitarkabādhane pratipakṣabhāvanam || YS, 2.33||*.

Yogasūtra 3.19²⁰⁸: (By practicing *saṃyama*) on *pratyaya* (concepts/ideas), knowledge of others' minds (is obtained).

Yogasūtra 3.23²⁰⁹: (By practicing *saṃyama*) on *maitrya* (friendliness), etc., strengths (are obtained).

Yogasūtra 3.24²¹⁰: (By practicing *saṃyama*) on *bala* (physical strength), the strength of elephants, etc. (is obtained).

Yogasūtra 3.27²¹¹: (By practicing *saṃyama*) on *Candra* (the Moon), the knowledge of the arrangement of stars (is obtained).

Yogasūtra 3.28²¹²: (By practicing *saṃyama*) on the *nābhicakra* (navel-center), knowledge of the body (is obtained).

Yogasūtra 3.30²¹³: (By practicing *saṃyama*) on the cavity of the throat, the cessation of hunger and thirst (is obtained).

Yogasūtra 3.31²¹⁴: (By practicing *saṃyama*) on the bronchial tube, calmness/firmness (is obtained).

Yogasūtra 3.34²¹⁵: (By practicing *saṃyama*) on the heart, knowledge of the *citta* (mind) (is obtained).

By choosing a fixed location on which to perform *saṃyama*, the practitioner may invoke his *SoA*. Through a variety of options and the ability to make a choice, he may,

²⁰⁸ *Pratyayasya paricittajñānam* ||YS, 3.19||.

²⁰⁹ *Maitryādiṣu balāni* ||YS, 3.23||.

²¹⁰ *Baleṣu hastibalādāni* ||YS, 3.24||.

²¹¹ *Candre tārāvyūhajñānam* ||YS, 3.27||.

²¹² *Nābhicakra kāyavyūjñānam* ||YS, 3.29||.

²¹³ *Kaṇṭhakūpe kṣutpipāsānivr̥ttiḥ* ||YS, 3.30||.

²¹⁴ *Kūrmanāḍyāṃ sthairyam* ||YS, 3.31||.

²¹⁵ *Hṛdaye cittasaṃvit* ||YS, 3.34||.

psychological speaking, have higher *SoA*. In addition, based on the locations on which he performs *saṃyama*, the practitioner is promised to have corresponding results. Thus, a *SoA* may emerge from the particular results that have occurred from his choice, depending on his level of belief. Once again, we must strictly find what promised results are verifiable and unverifiable through the data derived from previous experimentation.

Comparative Accuracy: The Necessity of One on One Analysis

This paper analyzed the *Yogasūtra*, *Sāṅkhyakārikā* and their respective commentaries to provide a measure of which texts may generate a greater *SoA*. The ideal comparison would be one text and commentary with another text and commentary. For example, the *Yogasūtra* commentary of Vyāsa and the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* commentary of Vācaspati Miśra should be compared to see which one potentially generates a greater *SoA*. A one-to-one comparison will allow for an organized and more accurate study of psychological phenomena like *SoA*. On the contrary, drawing from various commentaries in a loose and disorganized manner can skew the results and ascribe more potentially generated *SoA* to a particular type of text than is deserved. For instance, if I study four commentaries on the *SK* and only one modern commentary on the *YS*, I may gather enough data to demonstrate that the *SK* as a whole can generate a higher *SoA*. This is a fallacious approach and careful measures should be taken to do a one-to-one analysis. For this reason, although I have drawn from various commentaries to delineate the philosophical teachings of *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*, I only used the *Yogasūtra* commentary by Vyāsa (*Yogabhāṣya*) and the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* commentary by Vācaspati Miśra.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to accomplish two goals:

- 1) To organize and understand the mind in *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*, through the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* and *Yogasūtra*, respectively.
- 2) To understand which of these authoritative texts generates more of a *SoA*.

This argument is theoretically based on measures of frequency, variety of choices, *centralizing* and results of personal effort.

Sense of agency refers to an individual's subjective experience of feeling control over his actions. In answering how one feels a sense of control, I have referred to the four forms of measurement listed above. Through the principle of repetition, one can evidently see that the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* provides more verses based on metaphysics while the *Yogasūtra* provides more verses based on psychology and practice. This is important to understand because metaphysics alone, at least in this sense, cannot easily explain how the mind of an individual is affected from subjective points of view. Thus, there is reliance on the part of psychology to explain the various states of mind. While the following three measures of *SoA* are repeated, not only does the practitioner get a "feel" for a particular text, but also may have a higher generated *SoA* from constant exposure to these types of verses.

Through the principle of choice variety, the practitioner may feel a greater *SoA* when there are more options from which to choose. More than the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, it is clear that the *Yogasūtra* provides more types of paths, deities and places upon which to meditate. For this reason, the practitioner may feel a greater *SoA* when reading the *YS*. Through the principle of the commentator's language (*centralizing*), the practitioner is constantly given responsibility through the concept of I'ness and *ideal terms*. The use of the personal pronoun "I" and *ideal terms* link a practitioner's sense of self (ego) to the text which evokes a personal reader that may contribute to a higher *SoA* than a detached

and unidentified reading. In general, both metaphysical concepts and practices are *personalized* to the individual possibly generating an *SoA* that an impersonal reading cannot offer. In both texts, the verses demonstrating the mind and its functions are mildly to moderately *centralized*, however, *Yoga* beings to *centralize* more dramatically when the *kleśas*, practices, and *siddhis* are encountered. In addition, these *egoic* verses are repetitive which may also create an *SoA*. Through the visibility of results, the practitioner can witness the effects of his actions. By witnessing one's results, one is able to feel more like agent. Most importantly, *SoA* is contingent upon a practitioner's belief. If the practitioner believes that the results will manifest, he may have a higher *SoA* when exposed to these verses. Even if the results of some practices are unverifiable (communicating with God), measuring a practitioner's belief is a great way of deriving *SoA* from results-oriented statements. Because the *YS* allows for the practitioner to witness his results and especially believe in them, it may allow for a greater generation of an *SoA* than the *SK*.

One school of thought or authoritative text is not superior to the other. In fact, one can conclude there are always two readings of *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*: metaphysical²¹⁶ and psychological²¹⁷. One can read almost any verse metaphysically and by simply adding a particular word one can then make it sound psychological. Perhaps this is one reason why both are known as sister schools. Returning to our introductory quote, it is difficult to say whether both schools claim to lead to the same goal. However, it is clear that both have substantially different focuses. In fact, they seem to function as complementary partners or puzzle pieces with perfect fit: metaphysically and psychologically. By studying the relationship between psychological concepts such as *SoA* and these sacred texts, we can

²¹⁶ Impersonal.

²¹⁷ Personal.

perhaps better understand why religious communities are attracted to certain texts and if these texts have an agentic charm within the nature of their language that draws people towards them. Furthermore, through the preferences for certain texts, we can identify individual differences in practitioners who may have metaphysical versus practice-based interests. A further inquiry can seek to answer whether practitioners take more of an interest in practice rather than metaphysics or vice-versa. Nevertheless, the psychological intricacies of a text, such as *SoA*, can perhaps influence why a practitioner prefers one text over another.

Appendix

An Experimental Design of the *Sense of Agency* in the *Yogasūtra* and *Sāṅkhyakārikā*

Abstract

Sense of Agency (SoA) is the phenomenon in which an individual feels that he is the author of his actions. *SoA* is also extended to a feeling of control over one's thoughts and experiences as "mine." In understanding why religious people choose to read certain texts, this paper examines whether a preference of certain texts is linked to an increased *SoA*. In the following three studies, participants (*yoga* practitioners) will be exposed to result-oriented statements, a decision making circumstance and pronoun/ideal terminology statements, respectively. In the first two studies, immediately after the exposure (prime), participants will be asked to do a brief 15 minute *prāṇāyāma* meditation followed by a self-report on perceived *SoA*. In the third study, participants will be asked to perform either a self-inquiry meditation or any meditation of their choice. Experiment I will measure *SoA* in *yogins* (practitioners) reading religious texts by measuring the relationship between their belief investment in promised results that are either verifiable or unverifiable. Experiment II will measure *SoA* in *yogins* reading religious texts by manipulating their freedom to choose certain variables under two conditions: no choice and multitude choice. The no-choice condition involves a rigid self-inquiry meditation while the multitude choice condition involves the freedom to choose the type and locus of meditation. Experiment III will measure *SoA* in *yogins* reading religious texts after the exposure to the personal pronoun "I" and ideal/role-model terminology. Experiment I should indicate that promised results should generally produce a higher *SoA*, but a stronger belief in results is linked to a stronger *SoA*. Experiment II should indicate that the multitude-choice condition produces a higher *SoA* than no-choice condition. Experiment III should indicate that exposure to "I" and *ideal terminology* should yield a higher *SoA* than non-exposure.

Introduction

Sense of Agency (SoA) is the phenomenon in which an individual feels that he is the author of his own actions and consequences (Haggard & Tsakiris, 2009). Explicit *SoA* is directly measured by rating scales and self-report questionnaires while implicit *SoA* is indirectly measured by the *intentional binding effect* (Dehouwer, 2003). The IBE measures the subjectively perceived interval between an action and its effect (Moore & Obhi, 2012). A high IBE indicates that the temporal interval or gap between the cause and effect is small producing a strong feeling of agency. IBE and *SoA* are linked such that the IBE is positively correlated with an *SoA*. Inherent in its definition, *SoA* is contingent upon certain actions that yield results. An individual will feel high in *SoA* when he feels that he authored his action and witnessed his results.

SoA is intricately linked to an individual's sense of self (identity). That is, when an individual performs an action he will immediately and non-cognitively evoke a sense of self (Balconi, 2010). Balconi writes, "The sense of self can be specific as not merely an awareness of the self with respect to actions but also an awareness of these actions as being

one's own." Therefore, in addition to actions, *SoA* is also linked to sensations, thoughts, intentions and phenomenal experience as "one's own." In the *dynamic processing system* (*DNS*) model, the self is in a connectionist network that has an underlying stable self that supports constantly changing nodes of the self (Mischel & Morf, 2003). In essence, an individual can maintain a constant and stable sense of self but still change elements in their identity.

With reference to the *DNS* model, religion is a powerful phenomenon that is often linked to individual's sense of self as religious individuals are very much exposed to practices, beliefs and traditions that expect much from them. As a result, their self-concepts are in dynamic interplay with sacred texts, places of worship, like-minded members of their community and so on. In general, an active self-concept experiences changes by the activation of roles, motivations, emotions, and subsets of the self-concept (Wheeler, DeMarree & Petty, 2007). Therefore, while being exposed to religious expectations and maintaining a stable sense of self, the active sense of self of religious individuals are in a changing conversation with their environment.

Yoga is a classical school of Indian philosophy that practically involves expectations of sense-restraint, physical fitness, breath control and numerous other practices. The *yoga* practitioner enters a dynamic world of unique metaphysical beliefs that guides his intense practices. Among those who identify themselves as *yoga* practitioners (*yogins*) practicing components of their worldview, how does *SoA* function in the choosing of their particular practices? For instance, within a community of *yoga* practitioners, why is the reading of the *Yogasūtra*²¹⁸ drastically more popular than the reading of the

²¹⁸ The *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali is a Sanskrit text that was composed around 400 C.E. that involves the practices of the *Yoga* school of Indian philosophy.

*Sāṅkhyakārikā*²¹⁹? Can *SoA* have something to do with these differences and can studying the link between *SoA* and religious actions (reading scripture) provide insight into why people choose certain practices over others, leading to a deeper understand of religion as a phenomenon? In this case, the word action that is strongly linked to *SoA*, is defined as religious practice that includes reading scriptures, attending places of worship, prayer, meditation, rituals and many other activities. Does *SoA* govern the types of texts used by *yogins* to the extent that these texts generate an *SoA* in the *yogin* through the practice of reading and make certain decisions?

In the following studies, although there are many verses to which the *yogin* is exposed, there are two main categories used to gauge *SoA*. The first category is the act of reading a given text and being exposed to certain verses as a form of religious practice. The second category is the act of making a decision (choosing) about certain paths, practices, beliefs, etc., which has already been studied in relation to generating *SoA* (Barlas, Zeynep & Obhi, 2013). The first component measures the relationship between the practitioner's practice (reading) and *SoA*. The second component measures the relationship between decision making and *SoA*. All studies will involve a form of meditation to gauge whether these texts contribute to an *SoA*.

The primary texts used in this study are the *Yogasūtra* (YS) of Patañjali with a commentary by Vyāsa (*Yogabhāṣya*²²⁰) and the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* (SK) of Īśvarakṛṣṇa with a commentary by Vācaspati Miśra (*Sāṅkhyatattvakaumudī*²²¹). ¹A *sūtra*, literally meaning

²¹⁹ The *Sāṅkhyakārikā* is a text that was composed around before 569 C.E. that involves the metaphysical framework of the *Sāṅkhya* school of Indian philosophy.

²²⁰ The *Yogabhāṣya* is dated around 300-400 C.E.

²²¹ The *Sāṅkhyatattvakaumudī* is dated around (CHECK DATE IN Larson)

“thread” in Sanskrit, is a condensed statement/aphorism often designed for the purpose of memorization. Composed in Sanskrit, there is a vast genre of *sūtra* literature.

This proposal will outline three potential experiments

- i) *SoA* and Promised Results
- ii) *SoA* and Option Variety
- iii) *SoA*, Pronouns and Ideal Terminology

Sense of Agency Scale (SoAs)

In measuring *SoA*, all studies will use the *Sense of Agency Scale (SoAs)* which through a series of questions, measures an individual’s conscious beliefs in agency after a certain activity has been performed (Tapal, Oren, Dar & Eitam, 2017). The following questions drawn from this study will be asked after participants engage in a form of *prāṇāyāma* meditation or a choice of their own (in the *SoA* and Option Variety study). If necessary, certain questions may be altered to fit the context of *yoga* practices. The *SoAs* isolates an individual’s beliefs about their success in attaining outcomes (Tapal, Oren, Dar & Eitam, 2017). The last questions are relevant to measuring a mechanism behind *SoA* which will be explained in the upcoming section

1. I am in full control of what I do
2. I am just an instrument in the hands of somebody or something else
3. My actions just happen without my intention
4. I am the author of my actions
5. The consequences of my actions feel like they do not logically follow my actions
6. My movements are automatic-my body simply makes them
7. The outcomes of my actions generally surprise me
8. Things I do are subject only to my free will
9. The decision whether and when to act is within my hands
10. Nothing I do is actually voluntary
11. While I am in action, I feel like I am a remote controlled robot
12. My behavior is planned by me from the very beginning to the very end
13. I am completely responsible for everything that results from my actions
14. **My anticipated result matched the actual result**
15. **I had control over my meditation**
16. **My meditation was effortless**

Types of Meditation

Within Indian philosophical schools of thought, there are many forms of meditative practices. In this study, we are more concerned with *prāṇāyāma*, self-inquiry, concentrative and chanting meditation.

Prāṇāyāma.

The first type of meditation associated with the *Yogasūtra* is called *prāṇāyāma* which literally mean the control of *prāṇa* (life-force, breath). This includes a series of disciplined breathing exercises involving exhalation, inhalation and stoppage of the breath. In the *Yogasūtra*, *prāṇāyāma* is a key practice for advancement in *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* (Eight-limbed *Yoga*). In the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*²²², a type of *prāṇāyāma* involves blocking the left nostril with the thumb, inhaling through the right nostril, holding, releasing the thumb from the left nostril and blocking right and exhaling through the left. After this is completed, the right nostril is blocked first, and a similar procedure is followed. Under the term *prāṇāyāma*, there are many other exercises, but in these studies, we will only ask participants to perform the alternate nostril breathing exercise mentioned above. Generally, participants will be primed with certain verses or conditions and asked to do *prāṇāyāma* for 15 minutes followed by an immediate self-report on their perceived *SoA*.

Self-Inquiry

The second type of meditation associated with the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* is called self-inquiry meditation. This involves a deep inquiry into one's essence or nature of self. The meditator is required to ask the question "Who am I," followed by identifying "what" he is not. For instance, the participant may think "I am not that table, I am not my leg, I am

²²² The *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* is a text composed around the 15th century associated with the practice of *yoga* including *āsana* (physical posture), *prāṇāyāma* (breath restraint) and other exercises.

not my body, I am not my mind, etc.” Sincerely, the meditator is asked to rule out things that cannot be his true nature. Because participants are *yoga* practitioners, chances are that they would have already prescribed to a metaphysical belief system that involves an immaterial consciousness/soul as their true nature, also known as *puruṣa*. Therefore, participants will be reminded that their true nature is *puruṣa* (consciousness) and will then be asked to perform self-inquiry by eliminating what they are not until, based on preconceived notions, they accept their true nature as *puruṣa*.

Dhāraṇa

The third type of meditation associated with the *Yogasūtra* is called *dhāraṇa* which literally means attention and involves intense focus directed to a mental image of an object, person, deity, idea, concept, etc. The methods section will describe the many options available to the practitioner. Nevertheless, the participant is expected to direct his fully attention to object X.

Chanting

The fourth type of meditation associated with the *Yogasūtra* is chanting which involves repeatedly chanting *mantras* (rhythmic statements). The methods section will describe the many options available to the practitioner.

Key Mechanism for *SoA*

Sense of control (SoC) is the primary mechanism behind all three studies. A *SoC* describes when an individual feels that he is in control of an action and that everything happens exactly as expected (Balconi, 2010). The theory posits that feeling in control is effortless and exerting control is effortful. Anything that requires the exertion of effortful control comes in unexpected situations. The nature of control that is exerted depends

entirely on the nature and difficulty of the unexpected situations. Therefore, an *SoA* occurs when the individual feels in control, which also indicates that the act is ideally, effortless in an expected situation that involves an expected result. Balconi introduces three components of *SoC*: motor control, situational control and rational control. The degree to which an individual feels in control is based on the *congruence* or match between a predicted outcome and the actual outcome (Balconi, 2010). The more congruent or matching the predicted outcome and actual outcome are, the higher an individual feels an *SoC*. The author writes

“We typically experience a feeling of effortless control when we achieve a perfect match between action and goal, i.e., without having to go through corrections or adjustments. Our sense of agency is heightened since the performed action fully conforms to our intention. In such actions, we meet no resistance and do not experience the kind of contrast between what we want and what the world will allow, which would sharpen our sense of self. In actions in which we meet resistance and have to overcome perturbations, the actual consequence of our actions do not match our predictions perfectly and we are left with the feeling that what we did was not exactly what we wanted to do. Nevertheless, at the same time our awareness of the efforts we have to make to try and keep the action on track heightens our sense that we are engaged in action” (2010).

In this study, the mechanism for *SoA* will be the *SoC* that is measured by the match between a participant’s anticipated outcome with the actual outcome. This match will be measured by the self-report questions on *sense of agency scale (SoAs)*, especially the last three statements which state:

17. My anticipated result matched the actual result

18. I had control over my meditation

19. My meditation was effortless

In this study, *SoC* will be measured by the match between the participant’s anticipated result of meditation with the actual result of meditation. Prior to the meditation, we will ask “What do you think will happen” but the previously exposed/primed verses should provide a visceral expectation of what will happen after the meditation. Although the *IBE* is a successful measurement for implicit *SoA*, we will not be using it in these studies

because participants will not be required to identify the time difference between their actions and results. In this case, the initiation will be the beginning of meditation and the effect will be the result of the meditation. The result is the mental state after 15 minutes of meditation regardless of the affect involved (calm, anxious, stressed, etc). The subjective temporal gap is between the initiation and results of meditation. Nevertheless, we will not be measuring *IBE*.

Study 1: *Sense of Agency* in Promised Results

SoA is linked to the results of one's actions (David, Nicole, et al, 2016). In addition, *SoA* is manipulated by the timing of the effect that is followed by a particular action. Under varying conditions, when there is a given X time following an event, the individual reports a high *SoA*. Conversely, when there is a given X time that is much later than the event, there is less *SoA*. For instance, participants' *SoA* are highly sensitive to outcome feedback (David, Nicole, et al, 2016). If a sensory event does not match the movement or if a predicted and actual even do not correspond, the experience maybe accredited to another entity instead of oneself. Oftentimes, individuals are motivated to act with promises of rewards. For instance, in the *Yogasūtra*, certain *sūtras* indicate that if a practitioner meditates, he will attain a calmer mind, control over his senses, higher states of concentration, establish a personal connection with his preferred deity of choice and attain the ability to cease the desire for hunger and thirst. What I believe will happen is that when the practitioner is exposed to a *sūtra* that promises a result, he will envision the result. This envisioning process creates a desire for an anticipated result, which will then be compared to the actual result if the practitioner chooses to take action. A study shows that,

“...showing the effects of an action as a prime before the action itself is performed robustly strengthens feelings of control, even when primes and effects are unrelated to the action itself and when the prime is subliminal ([Aarts et al., 2005](#), [Linser and Goschke, 2007](#), [Sato, 2009](#)). Such

effect-priming may work by increasing the predictive representation of the effect” (Wenke, Fleming & Haggard, 2010).

Therefore, through the *sense of control* mechanism, the practitioner may feel an *SoA* depending on the congruence between the predicted and actual outcome, which the entire experience itself, as an expectation, has been stimulated by the exposure to a result-oriented *sūtra*.

Proposed Mechanism

Exposure to Result Oriented *Sūtra*--->Expected Outcome--->Action (Meditation)--->Result (State of Mind)---> *SoA* Feeling based on *SoC* mechanism.

Example:

--->Exposure (Result Oriented *Sūtra*)

praccharddanavidhāraṇābhyāṃ vā prāṇasya ||1.34||

From inhalation and exhalation of breath (the mind is stilled)

--->Expected Outcome

The mind will be stilled or calmer, if I do *prāṇāyāma* mediation (exhaling, inhaling)

--->Action

Practice *prāṇāyāma* meditation (inhalation, exhalation, stoppage, etc.)

--->Result

Calmer Mind, More agitated mind, no effect, etc....

--->*SoA* Feeling

If mind is calmer, then expected results match actual results and higher *SoA* is generated.

If mind is more agitated, no effect, etc., then expected results do not match actual results and lower *SoA* is generated .

In the *Yogasūtra*, many results are empirically measurable while some are clearly unverifiable. For instance, while we can measure someone's anxiety or mental calmness from practicing meditation, we may never be able to measure someone's subjective experience of a connection with a particular deity. With promised unverifiable results, how are they to be measured, if they are in fact, unverifiable? Whether a result is verifiable or unverifiable, measuring a practitioner's **belief** in a result itself can contribute to insight into measuring *SoA*. That is, the level to which an individual believes he will get his result may vary *SoA*. As mentioned before, intentions and phenomenal experiences as one's own are linked to a sense of self (Balconi, 2010). Therefore, in the individual's phenomenal experience of thought, a general belief will translate to "my" belief and the invocation of an "I" may evoke an *SoA*. Thus, we should measure belief with both the empirically verifiable and unverifiable results and verify the verifiable results as well when assessing whether the practitioner feels an *SoA*. This is done by measuring the strength of the belief with the particular *sūtra* that is introduced to the reader that promises a certain result. We are measuring the practitioner's reaction (*SoA*) to being exposed to a particular *sūtra*. In addition to this, with promised verifiable results, we can also ask the practitioner how much he feels like an agent after attaining the result.

Exposure to Result-Promising *Sūtra*--->Expected Outcome (**Created Belief extracted from Expected Outcome by measure**)--->Action (Meditation)--->(Absence of Verifiable Result)---> *SoA* Feeling based on *Belief* mechanism.

It is important to note that the *Belief* mechanism can function even when verifiable results are present.

Exposure to Result-Promising *Sūtra*--->Expected Outcome (**Created Belief extracted from Expected Outcome by measure**)--->Action (Meditation)--->Verifiable Result--->
SoA Feeling based on *Belief* mechanism or *SoC* mechanism.

Therefore, in the case of unverifiable results, the experimenter is required to measure an *SoA* based on the *belief* mechanism only. However, in the case of verifiable results, the experimenter can measure *SoA* either through the *belief* mechanism and/or the *SoC* mechanism.

Research Question

Is there a relationship between *SoA*, belief investment and the results that are promised to a practitioner?

Two types of promised results

- a) Verifiable Promised
- b) Unverifiable Promised

Hypothesis

- a) Belief in the acquisition of results may lead to a higher *SoA*.
- b) The manifestation of results may lead to a higher *SoA*.
- c) Failure to manifest results may lead to a lower *SoC*, yielding a lower *SoA*.

Note: If, however, the practitioner feels a higher *SoA*, even if results have not manifested, this may occur because he feels that he is responsible for the failure. This possibility will not be tested in this paper.

I hypothesize that a practitioner will feel a higher *SoA* depending on how much he **believes** the desired effect will manifest. If a *yogin* believes for instance that he will

establish connection with his desired deity or achieve a supernatural state, then he will feel that his actions are worthwhile and he is, in fact, the author of his actions. Therefore, when he reads a particular *sūtra* that may generate an *SoA* by promising results, he may experience a higher *SoA*. If, however, the individual does not believe it, he will feel less of an *SoA*. Therefore, if a *yogin* believes that a result will emerge and he feels that he is the author of that which occurs, then he will feel a greater *SoA*. This demonstrates that belief in an outcome that is tied to one's efforts may generate a higher *SoA*.

Method

In the experimental condition, using a sample of 20 *yoga* practitioners as participants, the experimenter should expose the reader to result-promising *sūtras* from the *Yogasūtra* and measure the belief-strength of the concept at hand. Exposure involves asking the *yogin* to read the *sūtra* in Sanskrit, its translation if necessary and to contemplate on its meaning for five minutes. In measuring belief, they should be asked to assess their level of investment in these *sūtras*. For instance, the experimenter can introduce the *sūtra* *pracharddanavidhāraṇābhyāṃ vā prāṇasya* or in English, “By exhalation and retention (the mind is stilled).” Then the participants should be asked how invested they are in this belief: high, medium, low. The participant should also be asked “What do you think will happen to your mental state after the meditation?” Then the participant should be asked to perform a *prāṇāyāma* breathing meditation for 15 minutes followed by an *SoAs* self-report.

In the control condition, 20 more *yoga* practitioners should not be exposed to any *sūtras*, asked what will happen and required to do the *prāṇāyāma* task, followed by a self-report scale. We will make the assumption that belief is related to verifiable and unverifiable conditions for now. However, for the sake of measuring a verifiable results

condition while using the *SoC* mechanism, we should assume the verifiable result is the experience felt after the meditation as calm, chaotic, etc. The *SoAs* will measure the *SoC*, more specifically, it will measure if the expected results matched the anticipated results. In the future directions section, I will explain the methodology for measuring one's *SoA* after verifiable results have emerged. As of now, this study will be measuring the following:

- i) Participants' reported level of belief in attaining the result of that *sūtra*
- ii) Participants' reported *SoA* after *prāṇāyāma* meditation using the *SoAs*

Expected Results and Discussion

With the study that measures specifically verifiable results using the *SoC* mechanism, participants should feel a greater *SoA* than control conditions (no *sūtra* exposure), specifically after experiencing their resulting mental state, after performing a 15 minute *prāṇāyāma* meditation that was preceded by a result promising *sūtra*. With the study that measures both verifiable and unverifiable results using the *belief* mechanism, participants should feel a greater *SoA* than control conditions (no *sūtra* exposure) when they have a greater investment (belief) in the *sūtra* that is at hand. If so, these results should indicate that exposure to result-promising *sūtras*, through priming and in addition to the act of meditation, should invoke a greater *SoA* in the practitioner.

Study 2: Sense of Agency and Option Variety

Sense of Agency is said to vary when the number of options are available (Barlas, Zeynep & Obhi, 2013). Research shows that in three button choice conditions (seven, three & one), the seven button condition generated the highest level of *SoA* in participants. This demonstrates that the more choices that are available, the more one feels a generated *SoA* that is higher. Will a practitioner feel more like an agent when there are more practice-based paths from which to choose? For instance, the *Sāṅkhyakārikā* barely demonstrates

any practices or paths from which to choose, while the *Yogasūtra* has three to four paths. In addition, with reference to meditation, the *YS* provides a large number of loci on which a practitioner can meditate, while the *SK* only provides one form of meditation.

Research Question

Is there a relationship between *SoA* and the number of options available in a particular practice?

Hypothesis

The school of thought or text that provides more options (paths/practices) to the practitioner will generate a greater *SoA* through choice.

Method

Using a sample of 20 *yoga* practitioners, two conditions (*Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga*) are introduced when measuring the variable, locus of meditation. The *Sāṅkhya* condition will represent a no-choice condition while the *Yoga* condition represents a multiple choice condition. The participants should then be asked to meditate for 15 minutes in the *Sāṅkhya* condition (self-inquiry). The second group should be asked to meditate for 15 minutes in the *Yoga* condition (attention to any location) After the 15 minute meditation, *SoA* should be measured by the *SoAs* self-report measure.

Locus of Meditation

***Sāṅkhya* Condition (No-Choice)**

In the no-choice condition, the participant will only have one option of meditation: self-inquiry. The practitioner will be required to contemplate upon his identity with the

strict reminder that he cannot change his form of meditation. The participant will be required to sit for 15 minutes and ask himself the following series of questions.

- a) Who am I?
- b) What am I?
- c) What am I not?
- d) What is my true being?

Based on his metaphysical predisposition, he will be reminded to end with the conclusion that he is an immaterial soul (*puruṣa* or *ātman*). Overall, the participant should have no option in choosing his form of meditation.

Yoga Condition (Multiple Choice)

In the multiple choice condition, the participant will have the freedom to choose any type of meditation. The participant will first be made aware of the four options (*prāṇāyāma*, self-inquiry, *dhāraṇa* and chanting) and later instructed what each options requires in terms of practical steps. In addition, the participant will be allowed further freedom to choose the locus of the particular meditation practice. The *prāṇāyāma* and self-inquiry conditions will be the same as the previous studies but the *dhāraṇa* and chanting conditions will allow for more freedom. The participant should be made aware that he has full flexibility and freedom to choose.

Dhāraṇa. The participant should be made aware that he can meditate on the following places.

1. Body (Throat, Navel, Head, etc.)
2. Any God (Śiva, Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa, etc.)
3. Planet (Sun, Moon, Mars, Jupiter, etc.)

Chanting. The participants should be made aware that they can chant and repeat the following *mantras*.

1. *AUM*
2. Prayer to Viṣṇu (*Aum Namō Bhagavate Vāsudevāya*)
3. Prayer to Śiva (*AUM Nama Śivāya*)
4. Prayer to Hanuman (*AUM Śrī Hanumate Namaḥ*)
5. Prayer of any choosing to any God

Expected Results and Discussion

After performing the meditation exercise, the participants who have the *Yoga* (multiple-choice) condition should generate a greater *SoA* than the *Sāṅkhya* (no-choice) condition based on the previously mentioned study by Barlas, Zeynep & Obhi which demonstrated that more options from which to choose leads to a greater *SoA* (2013). The mechanism is inherent in the definition of agency: the ability to choose and be the author of one's actions.

Study 3: Sense of Agency in Pronoun & Ideal Term Usage

Sense of agency is linked to an individual's sense of self (Balconi, 2010). "Its general features are the immediate experience of the self as subject and its limits with respect to both time and that which is accessible to immediate self-consciousness." The self has first person content and is reproduced by the use of the "I" pronoun (Balconi, 2010). This idea is demonstrated by the *immunity principle* which states that when a person uses the first-person pronoun "I" he cannot make a mistake about the person to which its usage is being referred, indicating that self-reference is an immediate and non-observational phenomenon that does include a cognitive process. Therefore, the act of self-referencing by using the pronoun "I" is an immediate and non-observational process which

is the pre-reflective origin for actions, experiences and thoughts. In fact, schizophrenic individuals who suffer from thought insertion demonstrate a loss of sense of agency through a process of misidentification (Balconi, 2010). For example, when experiencing a thought, patients are missing the “I am” or “mine” part of the experience, leading to the belief that the thought is from elsewhere. Therefore, wherever there is an invoking of *SoA* in an individual, there is an immediate and non-cognitive link to a certain sense of self.

A study on longitudinal effects of narrative therapy and agency indicate that when one’s narrative identity, sense of self, is gradually modified over time, one feels more agency. This clearly demonstrates the interplay between the sense of self and *SoA*. When the sense of self, narrative, is altered in certain ways, *SoA* can increase. In addition, the first person pronoun “I” is correlated with depression (Edwards & Holtman, 2017). In fact, “I” is seen as a marker for depression. This indicates that since depression is very much linked to one’s sense of self, one’s sense of self is linked to language, more specifically the word “I”. Therefore, in order for a depressed state to emerge when using the term “I”, one’s sense of self is evoked in some manner. From this logic, we can test how invested a practitioner feels when he reads the term “I” in a text.

Going further, I want to argue that from this personal, egoic investment, one’s *SoA* is also evoked. That is, a potential correlation between the sense of self (identity) and *SoA* may indicate that the more a practitioner is invested in his practice through language, the more he will feel an *SoA* while reading and engaging in other practices. For instance, let us assume the reader comes across the sentence: “I will practice more intensely to control my senses.” Since he is already a practitioner with the intent to practice, the “I” in this sentence may immediately cause him to identify with the text. Furthermore, the “I” will make him feel more responsible and a sense of authorship over what he has to do and how he has to

be (expectations/ideal). I am arguing that *SoA* is invoked immediately after a sense of self is identified with the word “I,” specifically when acts like reading, meditating, praying, etc., are performed.

An *ideal term* is a term used to describe a preferred state, position or rank that an individual identifies with. For instance, the term *yogin* or *yogī* is a term that means “one who practices *yoga*.” To claim that one is a *yogin* implies that one practices *yoga* or has reached a certain state of mind, level of qualification, etc. To the aspiring *yogin*, the ideal *yogin* mentioned in the *Yogasūtra* is like a role model. Studies on the effects of role models on self-perceptions of success indicate that role models have an impact on the self under two conditions:

3. A role model will either positively or negatively influence an individual’s self only under the condition that the latter compares himself to the former (Major, Testa & Bylsma, 1991). That is, a striving *yogin* who reads the *Yogasūtra* must compare himself to the ideal *yogin* in order for his self to be influenced
4. Whether the influence of the role model on the individual is positive or negative depends on the perceived attainability of the role model’s success. If individual perceives the role model’s success as attainable, he will be self-enhanced. Conversely, if the role model’s success appears unattainable, he will feel self-deflated and demoralized (Lockwood & Kunda, 2000).

These findings indicate that an individual’s role model is linked to his sense of self. In other words, whoever you admire as a role model and strives to imitate has the potential to influence your perceived sense of self. Therefore, if the aspiring *yogin* admires the ideal *yogin*, he can either feel enhanced or depleted based on his perception of the attainability of his role model’s ideal.

The goals an individual makes determine the specific memories used to construct his current sense of self (McAdams, 2008). For example, if I want to be a motivation speaker, I may access particular memories of myself overcoming obstacles, speaking publicly and making people feel good or motivated. From this premise, I argue that an individual who is motivated to become an ideal through their goals of being a *yogin* (McAdams, 2008), will immediately invoke a sense of self (“I”). This link will tie them to the *ideal terminology* evoking a similar response as the pronoun “I.” As a result, they will also feel an *SoA* when performing certain actions like meditation, prayer, etc. In this case, when a practitioner is exposed to certain versus using the ideal terms that indicate how a *yogin* should or should not be, his sense of self and consequently, *SoA*, will be activated. Assuming that the practitioner admires or strives to become a *yogin*, after being exposed or primed with this word and identification has occurred, does the practitioner feel a higher or lower *SoA* when reading the text?

Research Question

What is the relationship between the use of the personal pronoun “I,” ideal terminology and a *sense of agency*? Is there a relationship between the priming of pronouns and a higher/lower *SoA* after meditative practices?

Hypothesis

One’s sense of self is correlated with one’s *SoA* and as a result, the use of the personal pronoun “I” and *ideal terminology* will evoke a greater *SoA* after meditative practices.

Method

Using the first sample of 20 *yoga* practitioners the self-concept should be activated/primed with the first person pronoun (“I”) to evoke the self-concept by introducing them to series of a personal statements associated with the *Yogasūtra*. First, they should be asked what they will think will happen to their mental state after the meditation. Next, they should be exposed to “I” related verses from the *Yogasūtra* followed by a 15 minutes *prāṇāyāma* meditation. Third, they should be asked to take the *SoAs* self-report questionnaire. Exposure via priming/self-activation involves asking the reader to read the *sūtra* in Sanskrit, it’s translation if necessary and to contemplate on its meaning for five minutes. In the second sample of 20 *yoga* practitioners the self-concept should be primed with ideal statements followed by the third person pronoun (he). Next, they should be asked what they think will happen to their mental state after the meditation. Then, they should be instructed to do the 15 minute *prāṇāyāma* meditation followed by the *SoAs* self-report questionnaire. In the control situation, in the sample of 20 *yoga* practitioners, the self-concept should not be primed, the practitioners should be asked what they think will happen to their mental state after the meditation, do a 15 minute *prāṇāyāma* meditation and complete the *SoAs* self-report questionnaire.

Self-Concept Priming

Personal (“I”) Statements: “I will work on lessening my desires.” “I am a devout *yogī*.” “I will be determined in practice.”

Ideal Terminology Statements: The *yogin* works on his desires. He is calm in all situations. A non-*yogin* is one who panics in all situations. The *yogin* meditates in the middle of any circumstance.

Expected Results and Discussions

After being exposed to *sūtras* with the first personal pronoun “I” and *ideal terms*, respectively, followed by a 15 minute *prāṇāyāma* meditation, participants should feel a higher *SoA* than in control conditions (no “I”/ideal term *sūtra* exposure). These results should indicate that language, specifically “I” and *ideal terms* evoke the self-concept and subsequently an *SoA*.

Future Directions

Certain results of meditation such as lessened anxiety, etc. are verifiable. Over a longer period of time (1-2 months), participants should follow a meditation regiment, report their levels of anxiety and their corresponding *SoA*. In addition, there are many other practices indicated in the *Yogasūtra* such as non-violence, celibacy, non-stealing, etc. The *sūtra* “*brahmacārya pratiṣṭhāyām vīrya lābhaḥ*” in English, “on attaining mastery in celibacy, great power is attained,” should also be studied. Participants should be asked to remain celibate for a month and then given self-reports on their experiences of confidence/self-esteem, followed by an *SoAs* measure.

Most importantly, meditation can prove to be a paradox. In practice-based scriptures, meditation and prayer are claimed to evoke less of an egoic self and an *SoA*. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the God Kṛṣṇa states “He whose nature is deluded by egoism thinks, ‘I am the doer’” (Vyāsa, 3.27)²²³. The *Gītā*, *Yogasūtra*, along with many other texts claim that as an individual progresses, he loses his *SoA* as he realizes his true nature as an immaterial soul. This is important because practitioners who read the *Gītā* are instructed to think that as they gradually practice, they will lose their *SoA*. Therefore, in an ideal sense, practitioners may conceive the loss of agency during practice a more valuable goal than a gain of *SoA*. In addition, in his research on psychotherapy and meditation, Epstein

²²³ *prakṛteḥ kriyamāṇāni guṇai karmāṇi sarvaśaḥ | ahaṅkāravimūḍhātmā kartāhamiti manyate ||3.27||*

believes that the meditator also loses his egoic sense of self and agency (1990). However, studies show that mindfulness meditation significantly helped sufferers of depression transform a previously helpless state of depression to awareness and control over reacting (Allen, Bromley, Kuyken & Sonnenberg, 2009). As religious scriptures claim a loss of agency and modern studies take different positions, we will have to analyze further the effects of meditation on the *SoA*.

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